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This set of instructional guidelines for adult basic education stresses understanding of the characteristics and problems of disadvantaged adults; developing basic communication skills (listening, speaking, writing), selection of instructional materials and equipment; effective classroom techniques for arithmetic and reading instruction, and an adult-centered approach to testing and counseling. Government agencies and other sources of community assistance are suggested as aids to adult basic education teachers in meeting instructional and related needs. Administrative and financial arrangements under Title III of the amended Elementary and Secondary Education Act are outlined. The document concludes by citing evidence of the favorable impact of adult basic education on the disadvantaged. A selected bibliography is also included. (ly)

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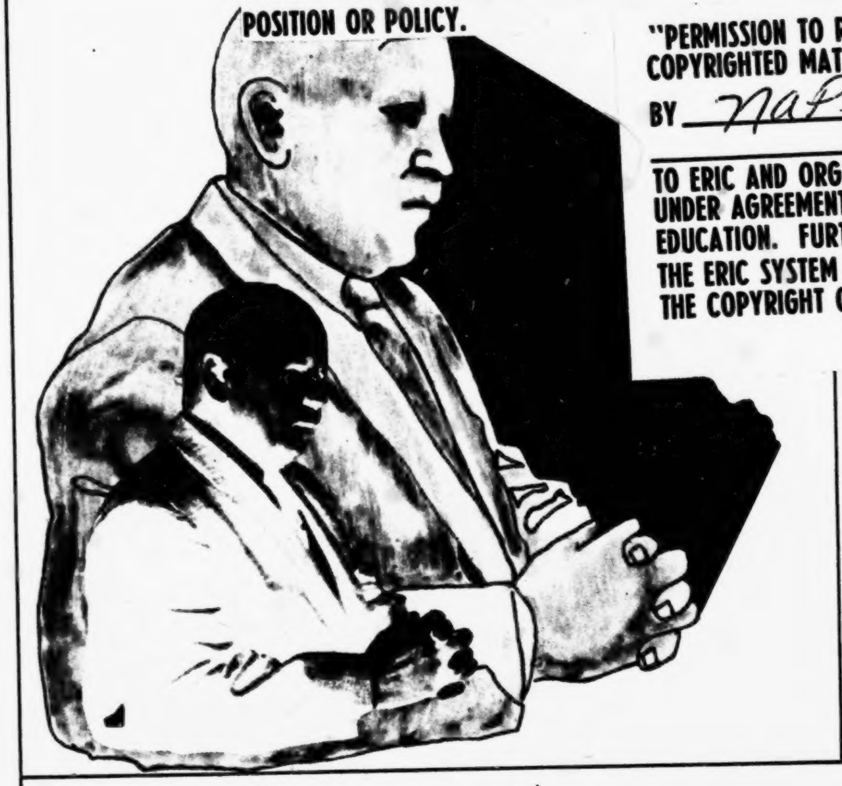

Teaching the Disadvantaged Adult

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching the Disadvantaged Adult was first published by the University of Georgia and the Georgia State Department of Education in December 1968. The book was written by Curtis Ulmer, chairman, Department of Adult Education, University of Georgia, and was edited by Dorothy Sparer of Editorial Services, Athens, Georgia.

The book was commissioned by the Georgia State Department of Education from funds made available to the state under the terms of the Adult Education Act of 1966. The original purpose of the book was to help teachers of adults in the state of Georgia who had had some prior competencies in teaching children qualify as teachers of adults. In Georgia, as in many other parts of the country, it is not always possible to give advance, preservice education to teachers called upon by pressing circumstances to move into the adult classroom. Dr. Ulmer's book provides a continuing guidebook not only for this teacher, but also for the one who has had a limited amount of pre- or in-service training.

Because of the nationwide need, NAPSAE asked the Georgia State Department of Education and the University of Georgia for permission to republish the book and to make such editorial adaptations as would be appropriate for nationwide distribution.

The NAPSAE Publications Committee and Board of Directors gratefully acknowledge the cooperation of the Georgia State Department of Education and the University of Georgia in granting permission to NAPSAE to make this addition to the literature of adult education generally available.

On the following page is the preface from the original edition, which gives further information about individuals who shared in the development of the book.

Robert A. Luke
Executive Secretary
National Association for Public School
Adult Education

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FROM THE ORIGINAL EDITION

Grateful appreciation is due to the Georgia State Department of Education for the funds that made this project possible. Particular appreciation is expressed to Mrs. Catherine Kirkland, state coordinator of adult education, who has for many years carried the message in Georgia for adult education. Passage of federal legislation that provided funds for adult education was the culmination of a long-time dream and the beginning of a new era in adult education for Mrs. Kirkland. Through her leadership and guidance, a program of adult basic education reaching nearly 20,000 adults was attained in the first year of operation.

The text of this book is part of a program supplying video tapes and materials to the State Department of Education for a comprehensive program of in-service education in adult basic education for teachers over the state.

Persons listed and unlisted have contributed their time and energy to making improvements in the original drafts. In fact, several took this project as a missionary effort—and their contributions and enthusiasm are indeed gratifying.

Mrs. Dorothy Sparer, editor, has become an adult basic education expert this past year. Her innate intelligence, dedication to her job, and patience helped her work with the sometimes inadequate materials she received. She is a "for real blythe spirit" who made this endeavor pleasurable.

William L. Bowden, former chairman of the Department of Adult Education, College of Education, University of Georgia; Claude Ivie, Department of Instruction, Georgia State Department of Education; and Doak S. Campbell, president emeritus, Florida State University, have read plans and drafts in various stages and have kindly offered constructive criticism and encouragement.

To Edwin H. Smith, director, Fundamental Education Materials Center, Florida State University, is due a special vote of thanks. The chapter, "Teaching Reading," came primarily from materials Dr. Smith has written over the past several years. Dr. Smith reviewed the chapter and made many constructive changes. Essentially this is his chapter, even though I am certain that there is much that he would change or qualify in it.

Finally to my wife, Irene Simmons Ulmer, an "A" grade for her patience on the evenings and weekends sans outings and companionship normally expected.

Curtis Ulmer

Chapter 1

Who This Book Is All About

Here are verbal snapshots of five students enrolled in adult basic education classes in various parts of the country:

First is Ruth Jones. She is Negro, 43 years old, and the mother of four children. She is separated from her husband and has not married again, although her last two children were fathered by another man. Ruth lives in a small Southern town of 34,000 people in a concrete block two-room house which she rents for $10 a week. It has no screens and no toilet. Her running water comes from a kitchen faucet which drains through the wall and runs on the ground outside.

Ruth dropped out of school in the third grade and has worked as a maid and a laundry worker. She is attending ABE classes because she has never had steady work or good pay. When the new minimum wage law was enforced, she was laid off because changes were made in her work assignment and she could not read well enough to route laundry bundles.

She believes that if she can learn to read and write well enough to do this job, she may finally earn a decent wage and have some security. At present she works as a maid three or four days a week and makes $5 a day.

Ruth is also worried about her children. Attending adult basic education classes has renewed her interest in their schooling, although she realizes it's now probably a lost cause. Both of her married daughters finished elementary school but did not go on. Her 16-year-old son dropped out of school in the ninth grade and worked part-time in the bowling alley setting pins—until the automatic pinsetters were installed. Now he hangs around the neighborhood store with a rough crowd, and Ruth is afraid he'll get in trouble.

She is proud of her 14-year-old daughter who is still in school and doing well in the ninth grade. But Ruth finds it difficult to provide money for the lunches and supplies needed to keep her in school. Besides, lately her daughter has begun to want better clothes and more spending money. The girl has been talking about getting a part-time job. Ruth fears that this may turn into a full-time one and that this child will drop out of school too.

* * *

This young man is Don Jones. Don is 24, married, and the father of a little boy of whom he is very fond. He and his family live with his parents in a city with a population of about 65,000. The $40 a week he earns as a service station attendant is not enough for a home of their own.

Don had a problem in school as far back as he can remember. He was tall for his age, and after he had been left back a few times, he found that he could no longer get along with his teacher or his classmates. He wanted to take shop work, but he could not get it until the tenth grade, which looked a long way off while he was struggling through the eighth grade.

In the ninth grade, he became a truant from school, and by the time his parents found out, it was too late. Although he squeaked through the eighth grade, his tests indicate that he is at a sixth-grade level. After doing various part-time jobs, he began working full-time at the service station when he was 20. He had applied for many other jobs that he thought he could do, but each time the lack of a high school education kept him from being hired.

Shortly after, he got a nice girl into trouble and had to get married. But his marriage is a happy one, and his main ambition is to get a better job so he can support his family and afford his own home. This is why he is attending ABE classes. Nothing less important would have gotten him there.

To his amazement, Don finds that he likes the class. He is treated like an adult and is doing well in his work. He attends class regularly and is already planning to go on to adult high school so he can work toward a diploma. After that, he hopes to get into a mechanics' training program.

* * *

This is Frank Jones. He is 46 years old, married, and the father of three children. Frank dropped out of school in the sixth grade (tests show he is at a third-grade reading level) to help his father gather the crops. Somehow he never got back.

His father was glad to have Frank's help and didn't see much use in book learning anyway. He thought the boy was getting good experience and building a strong back and often said that a good farmer could always make a living for his family.

Frank married when he was 20. He moved to a small but adequate home of his own that his father and brothers helped him build on 40 acres of the family farmland. He has lived there ever since, near a town of 2,000 people.

Things went well enough until after the war when Frank found that his farm was too small to be profitable and not large enough to mechanize. So he did some day labor for the county road department to supplement his income—until the day he hurt his back in a farm accident and had to give up manual labor entirely.

In spite of his predicament, Frank keeps his pride and his strong convictions. He will not accept welfare, and he will not leave his home. He is also opposed to the idea of his wife's working, but he cannot find an alternative. She has gone to work in a nearby textile mill.

These are the frustrating circumstances that brought Frank to the ABE classes where he works very hard—and very impatiently—two nights each week. He is anxious to get through the elementary work so he can qualify for a job as store clerk or bookkeeper. Unfortunately, there are few jobs of this kind near the home he refuses to leave.

* * *

Mabel Jones is an attractive young Negro woman of 26. It seems to Mabel that she has lived in the big city all her life, although she moved there with her mother from a small Southern town when she was 15. She was in the eighth grade then—doing sixth-grade work.

At first, the city was confusing to Mabel and school frightened her, so her mother did not make her go. After a time, she got to like the excitement and variety of the city, but she never felt really at home there and she never got back to school.

When she was 18, Mabel married. Her husband moved into the apartment she shared with her mother and brother. After her child was born, she found she had to go to work to support the baby, her husband, and herself. That was more than she could manage, so she asked her husband to leave. He did, and she has not seen him since.

Meanwhile, her little girl is eight years old, and Mabel is devoted to her. She wants to leave their unsavory neighborhood before the little girl is old enough to stay out on the streets. Right now, she leaves her daughter with the child's grandmother while she cooks and washes dishes in an all-night restaurant. Her employer likes her and will give her a better job on the counter or as a cashier if she learns to read, write, and count change better.

So, Mabel started coming to adult education classes. She sees them as her only chance to earn the money she needs to give her little girl a better place to grow up.

Finally, this is Manuel Chavez. Although he is only 38 years old, Manuel looks much older—perhaps because he has been a migrant farm worker almost as long as he can remember.

Manuel never really attended school for more than three months at a time. By the time he was 10 and in the third grade, he was helping his Mexican-American mother in the vegetable fields full-time, and he has been moving from job to job ever since.

Once Manuel decided to leave migrant work and took a job at a dairy farm. But he left after a short time because he missed the excitement of frequent moves and different kinds of work. In the last few years, Manuel has earned as much as $20 a day when the crops were good, but he has not managed to save any money. And he has not married because he did not want the burden of supporting a wife and children. Instead, he usually moved in with a woman whenever he stayed a month or more in one place.

All in all, Manuel has not really had any problems getting along until lately. After 20 years in the field, Manuel's health is not as good as it was, and he is beginning to be worried about his future prospects. He realizes, in a vague sort of way, that eventually he will have to give up farm work and get some other kind of job.

With that in mind, he attended adult classes two nights a week last year and finally learned to sign his name. He is very proud of that accomplishment, but it was not enough to overcome his dread of the class. After a while, he stopped coming because he was ashamed of his broken English and of his difficulty in understanding the teacher.

In spite of this discouraging experience, Manuel is back in class now because he still wants to learn to read and write. He is not really sure he can learn anything at all, and he does not know what kind of job he might get if he did learn. But he is sure he wants to try again because he doesn't know what else to do.

* * *

When reduced to statistics, these five undereducated adults represent as much as 15 percent of the adult population. There are more than 25 million people like them over the age of 14, who have less than an eighth-grade education. Most of them are crowded together in city ghettos or rural slums doing what little menial work has not yet been taken over by machines. Many seek out a meager income in seasonal farm work and migrate from one low-paid, uncertain job to the next.

About half of the adult basic education students come from what are euphemistically called minority groups. It is not just the fact that they are, like astronauts or millionaires, in the minority which sets them apart—it is their educational, social, cultural, and economic poverty. The minority groups most prominently represented in adult basic education classes are Negroes (particularly Negro women who are family breadwinners), Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Mexican Americans, and American Indians.

The other half of the ABE population represents the poor—but white—segment of our population. Most of these are rural people, particularly from the South, the Southwest, and the Appalachian states.

Because the ABE teacher's background, more often than not, is quite different from that of his students, the teacher may find that he has a difficult time getting to know people who think so differently, act so differently, and live so differently. But learning will not take place until teacher and student know each other well enough to trust each other.

And that is what this book is all about!

Chapter 2

What Is Different About Teaching Adults?

In teaching adults—any adult, advantaged or disadvantaged—the educational program should be as appropriate to the interests and abilities of the students as it should be when children are being taught.

For example, the teacher of children studies child development in an effort to understand what makes children tick—how they think, how they grow, and how they learn. Teachers of children also try to understand their students by measuring their aptitudes, visiting their homes, talking to their parents, and reading their past records. Ideally, the teacher then gears his educational program to the interests and abilities of his students. He soon discovers that one will learn arithmetic faster by counting dinosaurs, another by counting abacus beads, and perhaps a third by counting cans of soup.

While adults will probably prefer counting change to counting dinosaurs, the same principles apply. As Wilbur Hallenbeck puts it, "The key to adult education is understanding adults."

But adults are not old children. Not all of the learning characteristics observed in children will appear in adult students, and there may be some new ones.

Generally speaking, the adult differs from the child in experience, in life-style, and in physical requirements for learning. The fact that the adult student is as old as (often older than) the teacher means that he often brings as much or more experience to the classroom than the teacher does.

It means, too, that the adult student often—although by no means always—comes back to school with, at worst, a sense of past failure or, at best, the feeling of being an alien in a world to which he is no longer accustomed.

The mature student's personality, habits, attitudes, and interests have solidified to a greater extent than those of a child. On the one hand, he is more rigid and less receptive to change. On the other hand, he knows better what he wants and expects from his education. And, unlike a child, he has the freedom to discontinue his education at any time.

While school is frequently the child's only serious occupation, it is usually an avocation to the adult who spends most of his time, thought, and energy on other daytime pursuits. Outside circumstances and distractions weigh far more heavily on the adult student than they do on the child.

The physical deficiencies of adults are not as significant for the learning process as they have often been made to appear. However, the fact remains that adults—for physical and psychological reasons—require more of the creature comforts in the classroom than children do.

Just as children sometimes come to class with negative attitudes about school, so do adults sometimes carry negative attitudes about adult education. More than likely, the popular notion that "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" has given some potential adult students many anxious moments. Our society's many reminders of the glories of youth and the problems of aging do not add to the adult student's confidence. And, in spite of the boom in continuing education, the old myth that school is for children still persists in the minds of many. The educationally disadvantaged person usually adds one more dimension to that myth: If his own prior experience in school was miserable, he may believe that school is universally a miserable experience.

The Advantages of Being an Adult Student

Being an adult in a classroom has its disadvantages, but the advantages, both to the student and the teacher, far outweigh them.

Because learning performance is the main criterion of a student's success in the classroom, an adult's outstanding advantage is that he can learn *as well as or better* than a child with the same native abilities.

Although he may lack formal education, he has been educated by living, and he has the accumulated knowledge of many years. In fact, his very lack of formal education may have cultivated shrewdness, the ability to think, and a high level of common sense.

It is well known that a child whose parents talk to him, read to him, and take him on visits to places of interest is more capable of learning than the child who has not had a chance to become familiar with words or the world around him. The adult, of course, has infinitely more knowledge of the world than even the most advantaged child. He does not have to learn what words mean before he learns to read. And he already knows what numbers are for—he must learn only how to use them.

In addition, the adult has an urgent reason for learning. For him education is not a matter of status, good grades, obeying the law, or pleasing his parents. Although the child may be in school because "It's a school day," the adult there is almost always a willing, purposeful consumer of new information and skills.

Even though he may have less energy than a child and there are more demands on his strength and time, the adult can usually compensate for these limitations by his single-mindedness of purpose, his greater self-control and endurance, and his ability to pace himself and use efficiently the resources he has.

The Disadvantages of Being an Adult Student

The biggest disadvantages of being an adult student are those the student creates for himself: anxieties and inferiority feelings about his ability to succeed in the classroom.

The adult student who has been away from school for many years often has a very damaged picture of his academic capabilities. This is especially true of the adult who dropped out or was expelled from school. This student may be wracked with anxiety about his ability to succeed in a venture which was disastrous once before or about his ability to return to the world of words and ideas.

Unfortunately, his anxieties are reinforced by current myths about the learning abilities of adults, by unpleasant memories of multiplication tables, and by the nagging belief that school is, after all, really only for children.

On the other hand, it *is* a disadvantage—although only a temporary one—to return to the classroom after a long absence. It is inevitable that a period of adjustment will be needed.

The young student is used to sitting at a school desk day after day, but most educationally disadvantaged adults have occupations which require much physical effort. The idea of looking at and learning from the printed word, of concentrating, of listening, and of writing will seem very new and strange—if not unpleasant—for several weeks until the strain and newness wear off. The hand which has been holding a shovel for years may have some trouble controlling a pencil. The mind which has been coping with the piecemeal details of housework may have difficulty concentrating on a printed page.

Although the discomforts of adjustment will be alleviated in a fairly short period of time, they occur at the beginning of the course—a very crucial time from the point of view of keeping the student in the classroom.

Another disadvantage of being an adult student was first put forward by investigators in the field of aging. Researchers cited indisputable evidence that adults in their early twenties begin to have measurable losses in eyesight, hearing, and the body's ability to adjust to extremes of all kinds. Edward Thorndike's early research in adult education tended to prove, too, that the ability to learn declined throughout the adult years, beginning as early as age 25.

The facts about sensory loss are true, but fortunately for all those over 25, their effects on the adult's learning performance have been found negligible by more recent research in adult education. Earlier investigators had neglected to take into account the many ways in which the adult compensates for what little sensory loss does occur. They had also failed to differentiate between ability and performance—a crucial difference so well illustrated by the fable about the hare and the tortoise.

When all these factors are taken into account, the conclusion is quite different. The adult's ability to learn, see, hear, and adjust to his environment may *improve* in spite of his deteriorating physical capacities.

For example, an adult whose eyesight is dimmer than a child's may still see more because he knows where to look and what to look for. An adult whose hearing is failing may actually hear more than a child because of his learned ability to listen, his ability to anticipate what is going to be said, and his superior word recognition ability.

An adult with half the energy of a child can probably accomplish twice as much because, among other things, he hopefully has already learned not to squander his energy in bursts of unnecessary activity.

But, be that as it may, it would be a rare child who could do a full day's work in a demanding job, shoulder the responsibilities of a family, and then sit through an evening class. And it would be a rare adult who could come bounding up three flights of stairs to a poorly lit and overheated classroom, sit two hours in an uncomfortable chair, and still learn something!

Although an adult is not physically or educationally disabled by the aging process, he does require comfortable learning conditions. This is particularly true because, regardless of his age or physical condition, he will, in most instances, be attending class at the end of an exhausting day.

Implications for Teaching

The teacher must understand the assets and liabilities of the adult student and translate them into appropriate teaching techniques.

Because the teacher is dealing with adults, he will find to his immense relief that he need no longer devote a part of the teaching time to being a disciplinarian. Perhaps for the first time in his teaching career, he will have the pleasure of being a teacher 100 percent of the time.

But, while the teacher does not have to worry about discipline, he does have to work harder at winning the respect of his students. A teacher of children already knows that he cannot be condescending to his students. The teacher of adults must be especially mindful of the fact that his students expect and deserve to be treated as equals.

The teacher will discover that he is superior to the students only in the sense that he knows more about a special block of subject matter. However, the students may—and probably do—know a great deal more about other subjects.

Because some students may be many years older than the teacher, he cannot rely on age as a claim to authority. The teacher must win the respect and confidence of the class through the usual social channels—by extending the common courtesies expected of adults and by proving through his actions that he is an interested, capable person.

Because the adult student can be expected to learn efficiently, the teacher can expect to cover as much, if not more, subject matter than in a class for children. There is no need to make concessions because an adult has been away from the classroom for a long time. The student will relearn what he has forgotten much faster than he will learn new material.

On the other hand, because an adult has many outside distractions, the work load will have to be adjusted with these factors in mind. Obviously, a woman with a new baby or a man recuperating from an industrial accident cannot be expected to do lengthy homework assignments.

The fact that the student may be better informed than the teacher about many subjects means that the teacher should be able to use the student's experiences and competencies to help him teach. This will not only enrich the educational program, but it will do much to improve the student's confidence and feeling of participation.

Because there are so many obligations, inhibitions, and anxieties which tend to make the students' classroom experience a trying one, it is unwise indeed to add physical discomfort to the list. In fact, comfort is a minimum requirement, and, at best, the classroom should be inviting.

The minimum requirement of comfort assumes such things as chairs suitable for the tired backs, stiffer joints, and greater bulk of adult bodies. Lighting, heat, and ventilation should be able to be controlled in the classroom. The class should meet in an accessible place (one which requires a minimum of stair climbing) and at a time which best suits the students' schedules. Unless the students themselves request it, adult classes should not be held overtime. All students should be encouraged rather than rushed, and older adults, particularly, should be permitted to choose their own work time.

The more desirable goal—that of an inviting classroom—calls for such things as attractive and instructive materials on the walls (maps, charts, and posters), informal seating arrangements (chairs in a circle, for example), and even the extra touch of a bowl of fruit or a vase of flowers to offset the stern, cold classroom atmosphere. Hopefully, rules and regulations established for children—such as "no smoking"—can be altered. The coffee break is as appropriate to the adult's classroom as it is to the adult's job.

The adult's motivation is a boon to the teacher, and a challenge! It is a challenge in that the teacher must first discover the student's motives, and then reinforce them constantly by showing him the connection between what he is learning and what he set out to learn.

Adults' reasons for attending class are diverse—they range from wanting to learn to write a signature on the payroll to a desire to read the Bible. Some attend to qualify for a better job, some want to help their children in school, some want to go on to high school or college, and some come back to school because they know more education is a passport to a fuller life. For many adults—it is a combination of many motivations.

No matter what the reason, the teacher should find out through an interview, group discussion, or other means the basic motivations which bring the students to the classroom.

Often the teacher will find the student's motives are unrealistic. In these cases, the teacher must work with the student to bring his expectations down to a reasonable level. If adults have unrealistic vocational objectives, the teacher can help them discover new interests and new goals. Short-range goals which are more easily attained may be substituted for long-range goals which seem unobtainable or unnecessarily far off.

Closely related to the matter of motivation is the matter of timing. This is best described by the studies of Robert J. Havighurst, who originated the theories of the *developmental task* and the *teachable moment.*

A *developmental task* is a basic task of living which comes up at a certain period in life. It is determined for each individual by the stage of life he is in (his maturity is usually a better index than his age) and by his own aspirations.

Successful achievement of these tasks—learning to tie a shoe, graduating from school, or going to work to support a family—leads to happiness and success with later tasks. Failure leads to unhappiness, the disapproval of society, and difficulty with later tasks.

Developmental tasks can be categorized in different ways but usually grow out of the social roles of the adult as a parent, family member, homemaker, worker, citizen, or user of leisure time. Society measures the quality of a person's life by the way in which he fulfills the tasks called for by these roles.

The time at which a particular developmental task is dominant is called a *teachable moment.* This is an important concept for the teacher for several reasons. Keeping in mind that *the adult learns what he wants to learn,* the teacher must discover what stage of life experience his student is in and what developmental task is dominant at that time in order to find the right concepts and materials to fit that teachable moment.

While society expects everyone to perform well in all the standard social roles, subcultures largely determine what tasks will be emphasized, what level of achievement will be required, and at what stage these tasks should be performed. One subculture might expect the 18-year-old to apply for college entrance and make the dean's list, while another would expect him to go to work and do just enough to get by.

In order to find the teachable moment, then, the teacher generally must know both the expectations of the student's subculture and the student's own expectations for himself. Then, using the experiences the student is familiar with and keeping in mind his educational goals, the teacher will be able to involve the student in a learning experience which has meaning and value to him.

It is well to remember, too, that—in most cases—the strength of the student's motivation is matched only by the weakness of his confidence. Everything the teacher does to make the program helpful to the students will, if successful, also have the beneficial side effect of building their faith in themselves.

A student in a cheerful, comfortable setting, who has respect both for and from his teacher and a clear view of how the knowledge he is gaining will help him realize his personal goals, will almost certainly be a more confident student. And, most important for adult education, he will be present at the next meeting of the class!

Chapter 3

The Art of Teaching

Ruth and Don and Frank and Mabel and Manuel—and a million more like them are waiting for class to begin. Each one of them—along with 10 or 15 or 20 other students from different backgrounds and with different levels of accomplishment—is waiting for his class to begin. How and where does it start?

The teacher must start where the student is. Adult education (like all education) must be individualized. It must be fitted to whatever goals and interests the students have in common as a group and then further tailored to the special requirements of individual students.

Choosing the Subject Matter and Materials

The task of the teacher is to teach adults how to live in today's world—not merely how to do addition or how to spell. The best approach, therefore, will be to teach blocks of subject matter rather than to compartmentalize instruction. When a lesson on "How To Apply for a Job" is taught by one teacher who weaves in reading, writing, arithmetic, good grooming, and occupational counseling, the result will be a useful, comprehensive learning situation for each student. But when isolated subjects are taught by separate teachers, the student is more likely to end up with a miscellaneous assortment of irrelevant facts.

Ideally, then, one teacher will teach the basic academic skills along with the basic skills of living in one interesting package pertinent to the lives of the students. However, the teacher must remember that the students live from day to day. In other words, the carefully planned lesson on "How To Apply for a Job," appropriate though it may be, may have to be scrapped if Manuel has been threatened with eviction by his landlord. Today's lesson will have to be about the legal rights of tenants, or "How To Find a New Apartment."

The ABE teacher will, of course, be wise to plan instruction by means of the traditional course outline. But he will be even wiser if he knows when to put the outline aside. While the course should not be guided by every changing breeze of the students' interests, neither should it be guided by an automatic pilot.

In many cases, an ounce of flexibility will be worth a pound of planning. The teacher should be prepared to substitute lesson 7 for lesson 2 if the opportunity presents itself. He should be willing to make a reading lesson out of the materials initially brought to class for a lesson in arithmetic. And, above all, he should not overemphasize reading or any other academic skill to the exclusion of lessons in living.

The teacher's flexibility about choice of subject matter must extend to his choice of teaching materials as well. While the range of materials available will be discussed more fully in a later chapter, it is enough to say here that for some classes a telephone book will be more suitable than an abacus and for others a newspaper want ad column will be more appropriate than a primer.

How Adults Learn

Although the teacher can and should remain open to suggestion about *what* to teach and can be freewheeling and creative about the materials he uses, he stands on fairly solid ground when it comes to knowing *how* to teach. There are many sound principles of learning which can be translated into successful methods of teaching adults. It is the application of these methods in terms of subject matter and materials which will vary with each class.

Current theories of learning are based on the old adage about leading a horse to water. People learn what they want to learn, when they're ready to learn it. They learn best if the material is taught in a situation similar to the one in which the knowledge will be used, and if it is taught shortly before it is needed.

It has been found that people learn most when success is neither too easy nor too difficult. Because disadvantaged students are easily bored by seemingly useless tasks and easily frustrated by failure, the goal must be set somewhere between boredom and frustration.

Their tolerance for failure can be strengthened only by repeated successes, and the satisfaction which comes from this success is the student's best reward. Words of praise or rewards from the teacher, including grades, are not nearly as effective with most adult students as is their own sense of advancement. Threats or punishment have only negative effects.

The student will learn more quickly by doing and participating than by receiving excessive direction from the teacher. On the other hand, he will learn better if his freedom to do and to try is balanced by evaluation and he is kept informed about his progress.

Concepts and abstract ideas are best taught by means of concrete, specific examples of familiar situations. It is also helpful to present these examples to the student through many of his senses—not only through his eyes or ears, but also, if possible, through his sense of touch, taste, and smell. And a sixth sense worth considering is a sense of humor!

The student must retain what he has learned. People remember best those ideas which fit in with their previous opinions—and have most difficulty understanding and retaining ideas which run contrary to what was previously believed. Retention can be improved by reviewing information shortly after it is learned or reinforcing proper responses immediately after they are made. Practice also improves retention, but it loses its value when unduly long or repetitious. It then degenerates into unthinking and automatic robot-like behavior.

The Task of the Teacher

Many of the implications of these principles for the teacher in the adult classroom are self-evident. However, a few should be reemphasized.

First, because the teacher cannot do more than whet the student's appetite for learning, he must set the table and serve the dinner in an appetizing way. Learning will take place only if the proper climate is created.

Second, teaching must be problem centered to be practical and interesting, experience centered to be meaningful and understandable, and oriented to all the senses to facilitate the transition from the concrete to the abstract.

In summary, current learning theories indicate that the student does many of the tasks which have, in the past, been considered the province of the teacher. The student is really quite self-sufficient. He provides the motivation to learn, the objectives, and the plan of attack. He learns best by doing things himself at his own pace, and he is rewarded by his own sense of satisfaction.

What, then, is left for the teacher to do? A capsule description of his job includes one "don't" and four "do's" as follows:

- Don't frustrate the student's good intentions or get in the way of his learning.

- Do present the right material at the right time in the right quantity so that motivation and satisfaction are not thwarted.
- Do help the student learn. Simplify difficult tasks and present them in ways which will make them easier to grasp.
- Do help the student remember. Show him how to reinforce his learning and give him appropriate exercises or assignments.
- Do help the student assess his progress. Evaluate all his efforts, help him learn from his mistakes, and show him where and how he can improve his work.

Chapter 4

General Characteristics of Students in Adult Basic Education

Somewhere between tables of impersonal statistics and the life stories of flesh and blood people lies the realm of the sociologist who describes the general characteristics of groups of people. His generalizations are less precise than statistics and less specific than case histories, but they may give more insight into the particular group of people this book is about—disadvantaged adult students—than any other approach.

The uneducated person tends to have a typical pattern of social and cultural traits. More than likely he is poor, because level of education usually goes hand in hand with level of income. He is also probably below average in ability to learn academic subjects. His poverty and lack of scholastic aptitude are chicken and egg propositions. Poverty fosters cultural and educational deprivation, which in turn affects academic achievement, which leads right back again to poverty.

The undereducated person is poor also in terms of motivation and confidence. His many failures in achieving the recognized American standards of success lead to a deep discouragement which may amount to a complete resignation to his fate. Consequently, he is easily frustrated and may stop trying to improve his life. Instead, he lives for today because today is enough of a challenge. Tomorrow is more than he can think about.

Although help may be available through the social service agencies of the community, he probably doesn't know about them and might not use their services if he did.

Whether he has either grown tired of trying to meet the expectations of middle class America or has never been given the opportunity to learn about them, the uneducated person tends to move in a cultural subgroup which condones his standards of behavior and achievement. Having joined a culturally deprived, excluded group, he is no longer subject to middle class standards. In fact, his exclusion from the mainstream of society actually prevents him from ever being successful and thereby removes the blame for his failure from himself.

Education is not readily available to adults or children in disadvantaged groups. The traditional middle class school system, which emphasizes middle class values and verbal skills, tends to process out those students who cannot conform to or keep up with its educational program.

The undereducated adult is without the day's good jobs or social skills necessary to escape from the limitations of his cultural subgroup, because education is the key to success in both areas. Without these, the uneducated person's exclusion from society and success is now complete. While he may want the same things from life as those in the mainstream of society, the excluded, disadvantaged person has very little means of acquiring them.

He lives, instead, in his own world with its own set of values and attitudes. Although he does not read well and is not well informed, he has strong opinions on a variety of subjects. The deprived family, particularly its mother, is frequently very religious, and its members may attend church regularly. The deprived person is also intensely loyal to family and friends, and he will often gladly share his home and food with them.

The main aspect of middle class life he aspires to is the acquisition of material comforts and conveniences. Today is what counts, and today is much more pleasant with a car, a television, or a washing machine. Insurance, a savings account, and medical checkups may be important tomorrow, but for those without hope, any investment in something as uncertain as tomorrow is as speculative as an investment in a uranium mine.

The deprived person is often superstitious and may believe that everything is a matter of luck. On the other hand, he believes that the reason his luck is so often bad is that the dice are loaded against him. He sees himself as a gambler in a crooked game in which the rest of society is cheating him. In a sense he is right.

He stands in awe of the pillars of this crooked society—including policemen, politicians, and teachers—because to him they are big and powerful. But he dislikes and mistrusts them at the same time because they represent a corrupt society which is conspiring against him.

The uneducated person may also have an exaggerated respect for the wisdom of a particular teacher or preacher, although he is not influenced by either one to any great extent. He is sure he could not live up to the teacher's or clergyman's expectations, and he is probably equally sure that he does not even wish to do so.

Neither abstract ideas nor abstract ideals appeal to the disadvantaged person. Instead, he has a physical orientation to life. His earning capacity depends on physical strength. His conversation depends on gestures. His religious services probably include hand clapping and other physical activities. His honor and self-respect depend on his ability to use his fists. He finds his recreation in sports, as spectator or participant, and athletes, especially prize fighters, are among his heros.

The New Face of Poverty

Poverty used to have sentimental virtue. But times have changed, and so have attitudes toward the poor. More often the rule than the exception, poverty was, at one time, only the natural starting point for acquiring wealth. This type of poverty was more a financial than a cultural phenomenon. The penniless immigrant, the man of humble birth, the man who was unemployed or made bankrupt by the Depression—all these were poor only in the sense that they had either just lost their wealth or had not yet had time to acquire any. As for the poor but honest man who remained poor but honest, chances were that his farm or small store yielded him enough livelihood to feed both his family and his pride.

Today, poverty has a different look. Now congregating in big cities, the poor are more visible and more deprived than their poor-but-honest ancestors on the little farm. Not only do they need more money to survive, but they need more than a strong arm and an honest face to earn it. If they are second-, third-, or fourth-generation poor, they may have neither the motivation, the education, nor the other personal traits needed to break the cycle.

Poverty is a stigma today, not because it is any less pitiful, but because there is a cure for it: education. Because a high school diploma practically guarantees a person the means for earning a livelihood, many people think poverty is unnecessary. They cannot understand why the poor don't get educated and go to work. What they do not realize is that the poor have *tried* to get an education, but that they have either failed or been rejected.

Because the traditional school system cast out those who could not conform to it, it is the task of the new school to create an educational system for the adult—one that conforms to the student, his level of ability, his needs, and his desires. Such a program must start where the student is, and it must help move him to where he wants to be. Adult basic education offers the only chance for the student's ultimate escape from the cycle of poverty and ignorance.

Physical and Learning Disabilities of Adult Basic Education Students

From the point of view of the teacher, most of the social and cultural characteristics of the typical ABE student will inhibit learning and will make communication difficult in the classroom. In addition, the teacher must also be prepared to encounter physical and learning disabilities in his ABE students.

In his book, *The Other America,** Michael Harrington states the problem succinctly:

> The poor get sick more than anybody else in society. This is because they live in slums, jammed together in unhygienic conditions; they have inadequate diets, and cannot get decent medical care. When they become sick, they are sick longer than any other group in society. Because they are sick more often and longer than anyone else, they lose wages and work, and find it difficult to hold a steady job. And because of this, they cannot pay for good housing, for a nutritious diet, for doctors. At any given point in the circle, particularly when there is a major illness, their prospect is to move to an even lower level and to begin the cycle, round and round, toward even more suffering.

There is no exaggeration in this statement. It is the stark truth. The poor, whose finances and philosophy demand that they live for today, do not receive the benefits of any of the preventive health care which is standard procedure in more affluent circles. Physical checkups or routine dental care are unheard of among people who go to the dentist only when a tooth is so painful that it must be extracted or who call a doctor only when prayer, courage, and home remedies have failed. By this time, more often than not, the patient is ready for the hospital emergency room rather than the doctor's office.

Because medical and dental problems are not nipped in the bud by preventive health care and because the quality of his food, clothing, housing, and working conditions is usually detrimental to his health, the disadvantaged person is likely to suffer from physical impairments and chronic diseases.

Tuberculosis, venereal disease, malnutrition, skin conditions, and diseases of the gums are among those most frequently found. Many of these ailments do not completely incapacitate their victims, and they are therefore left untreated for years by those who can bear pain better than the expense of treatment.

The physical impairments most prevalent among the disadvantaged are visual problems, dental problems, and hearing difficulties. In one

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* Harrington, Michael. *The Other America: Poverty in the United States.* Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1963. p. 22.

ABE program for 100 migrant farm workers, it became apparent that poor eyesight was a major impediment to learning. Local doctors, who were persuaded to give free eye examinations, discovered that more than half of the students needed glasses. It was not until these were provided, again through local initiative, that the learning process could begin for the majority of those enrolled.

In addition to problems of health, the disadvantaged student usually has a number of learning disabilities, all related to his poor language development. His inability to pronounce words correctly—many ABE students use some kind of dialect—makes it difficult for him to spell, read, or even talk to others. Because the ABE student's vocabulary is usually limited to words which describe concrete objects, he cannot speak or think in abstract terms. His unsophisticated vocabulary does not function well for fine distinctions or precise definitions, both of which are needed in the classroom.

In his day-to-day life, the ABE student relies heavily on gestures and facial expressions to help him convey his meaning. However, because he cannot gesture on a written intelligence test, his score there is usually low. Furthermore, his ability to solve problems with his hands or by hit-and-miss methods may get him through the day, but it will hinder him on standardized tests which measure cognitive ways of solving problems.

For these reasons, the teacher of the disadvantaged student should not place too much emphasis on the results of verbally oriented tests. The student's difficulties with them are an index of his language disabilities and should not be taken as an index of his ability to learn.

Instead, test scores should give the teacher clues to the distance education will have to travel in order to meet the student at his starting place. Again, it is the task of the teacher to—

1. Determine the student's medical and learning disabilities.
2. Understand the reasons for them.
3. Empathize with each student's desire to succeed in spite of these disabilities.
4. Plan a program to help him reach the goals he has set for himself.

A general knowledge of the typical ABE student and a personal acquaintance with the individuals in the class will give the teacher the basic facts he needs. Understanding and empathy for the student will provide him with the motivation he needs to help the student and to overcome any personal distaste he may have for people whose values are different from, and sometimes opposite to, his own.

A teacher who has progressed this far has won half the battle. He is ready to proceed. He now needs the knowledge and tools to fashion a *learning* situation out of a teachable situation. The next step is to turn learning readiness into learning.

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Chapter 5

Getting Off to a Good Start

The adult basic education program has broad, far-reaching objectives not paralleled in the history of American education. In fact, it cannot really trace its ancestry directly to education, even though adult educators have been trying to stamp out illiteracy for a long time. The program is a direct descendant of the social and political ferment of the 1930's and is an offspring of the recently declared war on poverty.

Basic education is rooted more firmly in a concern for people than in a desire to extend educational frontiers. Its goal is to make participating citizens—socially and economically—out of an alienated and rejected segment of the population. This goal accounts for the broad ABE curriculum, which is designed to move the student beyond the acquisition of academic skills.

The Emergence of Total Counseling

It also accounts for the ABE program's interest in the student's life outside the classroom. Counseling and guidance are as much a part of the ABE program as teaching. While counseling is, at present, still largely a matter of solving classroom problems, a new type of total counseling service for the disadvantaged adult is slowly emerging.

It is evolving bit by bit out of experiments with new approaches to counseling and by the creation of a new breed of counselor. This person will be part educational counselor and part social worker with special expertise in dealing with the educational and personal problems of the disadvantaged.

In one such experiment, a person affiliated with the poverty program and who had broad experience in working with deprived adults interviewed each ABE student when he registered. He asked questions to help him determine initial class placement and to reveal the student's employment aspirations and abilities.

On the basis of this interview, the counselor often placed the student in a Manpower Development Training Program or a vocational program instead of the basic education class. He divided his time between the school and the community and helped the student who did not enroll to find employment or vocational training opportunities. He also visited the new student in his home.

Unfortunately, this type of comprehensive counseling is still a dream for most program administrators. And until this dream becomes a reality, the ABE teacher will have to face the fact that he must be both counselor and teacher to his students. Although a few programs are fortunate enough to have the services of educational counselors, they are in the minority. Besides, the educational counselor's experience with high school guidance and testing programs usually does not equip him to deal with the social, educational, or personal problems of the undereducated adult.

Most welfare caseworkers are more informed and more skillful in counseling ABE students than school counselors are. But caseworkers do not have the information or experience they need to deal with the students' educational difficulties.

Hopefully, a fortuitous blending of these two disciplines will someday come about. But, in the meantime, most teachers can expect to be counselors by default. And because most adults attend class only one or two evenings a week, most of the counseling will take place in a group situation in the classroom.

To prepare the groundwork for both counseling and teaching, the teacher will have to exert whatever patience, understanding, and personal magnetism he can muster to win the trust of his students. But most ABE students have learned to trust no one connected in any significant way with the society which has rejected them!

What then? They must learn to have confidence in their teacher and to trust each other. When this happens they are well on the way to extending this trust to the rest of the community. But how to do this?

The teacher will be called upon to remember and act upon everything he knows about the values and attitudes of the uneducated, in addition to everything he knows about his particular students. Only with this kind of background will he be equipped to understand otherwise inexplicable or even unacceptable behavior.

At the same time, the teacher should remember that undereducated adults are accustomed to authority being expressed by those in command. They expect the teacher to be the boss and would be just as disturbed by indecisive or unauthoritative behavior as they would be by lack of sympathy or understanding. The fair-but-firm approach will probably be most successful.

Having established this kind of rapport, the more fortunate teacher will then be able to turn to the comprehensive guidance program provided by his school or the part-time services of an experienced caseworker. In the absence of either of these, he will then proceed with the task of educational counseling himself.

The Teacher as an Educational Counselor

As counselor, the teacher will be primarily responsible for three tasks—the initial interview, testing, and record keeping.

Adult educators have long cautioned against the shock of extensive testing of adults, particularly deprived adults, when these students first enter the program. However, some information is needed to place the new student, and the initial interview is a good time to obtain it.

A 10-minute oral test in word recognition will reveal the student's reading level, establish his placement in a class, and indicate the reading materials he can use profitably. This test should probably be the only one given during the interview. The rest of the testing program can wait until the adult is established and more comfortable in his new role as a student.

However, the initial interview should elicit a certain amount of personal information—as much as the student is willing to provide freely. It should cover the student's prior education, his reasons for wanting to attend ABE classes, and any other information required by the school or considered important by the teacher.

When conducted properly, the initial interview is more than a source of basic information. It can be—and should be—a time to welcome the student and to reassure him that his fears and apprehensions about returning to school will not, hopefully, be justified.

At the very least, the interview should not become an unpleasant chore or, worse yet, an embarrassing situation. Much of what the student tells the teacher during the interview will be information the student is neither proud nor happy about—his age, his employment status, his home life, and the record of his previous schooling, which will not have the makings of a success story.

Particularly painful to some ABE students is their inability to read and write, a fact which they may have successfully hidden from the world until now. Those still not ready to admit their illiteracy during the interview will sometimes resort to "I left my glasses at home" when confronted by a reading test. In such cases it is best to forget about the test and to enroll the student in the first reading level.

One teacher used a novel technique to avoid embarrassing students at registration. He displayed adult reading material, graded from the first to the eighth grade, throughout the room, and instructed the students to browse while he completed some forms. The materials which each person selected to read gave him a pretty good indication of that person's reading level.

As soon as the new student is reasonably comfortable in the class, he should be given an achievement test. His performance will give the teacher more information with which to plan his total program. Through subsequent testing, a record of his progress from one grade level to another can be charted by the school.

The teacher cannot be guided by the normal curve when he is evaluating students' performance on any of the standardized tests. Obviously, the disadvantaged person's lack of education and verbal ability will usually result in very low scores. These should be taken as a measure of his past schooling rather than a forecast of his ability to succeed in the program.

Despite the limitations of standardized tests and the fact that part-time programs do not provide much time for record keeping, records must be kept systematically in ABE programs. For one thing, the U.S. Office of Education requires that a minimum amount of data about students be reported in programs which it finances. Similar requirements are made by local and state agencies involved in the administration or funding of programs.

In addition, the teacher will find that good record keeping in terms of each student's progress will be useful to him in his role as guidance counselor as well as teacher. Of course, such records will pass valuable information on to the student's future teachers and counselors and will make it unnecessary for them to again put the student through the same routine of interviewing and testing.

There is a third advantage to good record keeping which will benefit students, teachers, and counselors in the long run. Basic and applied research—sorely needed in all aspects of adult basic education—can be done only if teachers will collect data as consistently and comprehensively as time permits.

A cumulative folder should be opened for each adult when he enrolls. The pocket type, with room for test scores and observations by teachers and counselors, seems to be most useful. Several state departments of education have designed special folders for statewide use as a means of ensuring uniformity of reporting.

In any case, the teacher will want to be aware of the minimum reporting requirements in the program as well as the desirability of collecting additional data which he feels is, or could be, significant.

While the teacher is frequently responsible, to a large degree, for the counseling and guidance of his students, this does not lessen the need or the responsibility of the school to work toward providing a complete professional program of counseling and guidance. Anything the teacher can do to initiate, speed up, or facilitate the effort to set up a guidance program will hasten the day when all his attention can be directed to teaching and his students' attention can be wholeheartedly directed toward learning.

Some states have already come close to this type of guidance program and have thought out the objectives it should have as well as the techniques which could be used. They have concluded that the counselor's case load should permit him to become thoroughly acquainted with the students, visit their homes, and learn as much about them as they are willing and able to communicate. Using this information, he should have an active part in helping to shape the plans for the total ABE program, in recruiting and retaining students, and in advising in the instructional program.

Chapter 6

Assistance Available from the Community

Enter Miss Irma Brown. She is known as a master teacher in her hometown of Rosedale. Miss Brown had been teaching for 18 years when she became interested in the plight of the disadvantaged, uneducated adult and made up her mind to help by teaching an ABE class.

Armed with the skills and experience acquired in elementary school classrooms, she attended a two-week workshop for teachers conducted by the state department of education. There she quickly learned both about the culture of the deprived person and about the most modern teaching methods. Since then she has read widely in the latest literature of this instructional field.

Thinking that she was completely equipped with experience, specialized knowledge, and missionary zeal, Miss Brown met her ABE class for the first time. The results of that first meeting were rather unsettling to her.

While the interest and determination of her students were obvious, there were many distracting problems. Miss Adams, for example, brought three of her children because, as she explained, she had no place to leave them. Several of the men in the back row seemed to have trouble seeing the blackboard clearly. One of the men near the window asked if he could qualify for welfare payments if he could prove he was attending class. And the fragile young lady in the first row coughed during the whole class period.

Some of the other students looked as if they had something on their minds too, but Miss Brown could not find out because the class ended before she had a chance to talk to them.

Feeling slightly deflated, Miss Brown rested her head on her lesson plan book and reconsidered her course of action. The lesson plan felt reassuring and familiar. Would she ever get to use it? What did she know about child care, optometry, or welfare regulations? But, being not easily discouraged, Miss Brown decided to find out if there were some community organizations which could help her help her students.

Had Miss Brown been employed in a well organized program in a metropolitan area, she might have gone through ABE administrative channels for help. Her immediate supervisor would have either made the appropriate contacts for her or would have given her the names of individuals and groups to call. However, because Miss Brown's ABE class was an isolated effort in a remote part of the state, she was forced to launch her own investigation.

The results were a pleasant surprise to her. She found that there were many agencies and programs in the community and surrounding county willing and anxious to lend a hand. Fortunately, Miss Brown categorized them and listed their services, realizing that this information might one day be useful to others. Although she had done a very thorough job of research, she left blank spaces at the end of the list, because she knew that she had not exhausted all the possibilities.

Governmental Agencies

The *welfare department* can help recruit students and provide them with financial assistance, employment, and personal counseling. County welfare departments will often refer their clients to ABE programs or provide lists of persons in need of basic education (because they do not qualify for welfare programs) to ABE administrators or teachers.

The *public health department* provides varying amounts of free or low-cost health care, chest X-rays, and speakers on health and sanitation. Although county health departments and field services have been providing valuable services for years, many deprived persons are not even aware of their existence, much less their services. The ABE teacher may wish to take his class to the local health department to acquaint students with the help available, or he may ask a member of the department to explain it to the class and give a talk about some pertinent aspect of health and hygiene.

Employment agencies can refer students, provide speakers, and approve Manpower Development Training Programs. Personnel of state employment agencies are acutely conscious of the need for basic education. They see large numbers of job seekers whose placement tests show they are unemployable because of educational deficiencies. Therefore, they welcome the opportunity to refer these clients to ABE courses and are usually willing to speak to adult classes about local job opportunities and educational requirements for employment. These talks will be based on the agency's periodic surveys of the local labor market as well as the personal knowledge the staff has of what local employers are looking for.

The *office of vocational rehabilitation* provides vocational training and other services to students as well as speakers for classes. The scope of services offered by this agency is so extensive that the teacher will want to invite a rehabilitation counselor to the class to explain the program and to schedule interviews with individual students.

The *public housing authority* is a potential source of classroom space. Many adult basic education classes have been conducted in recreation rooms or assembly rooms of low-rent housing projects administered by city housing authorities. This procedure can both eliminate transportation problems and provide an informal neighborhood setting for classes. In addition to making the space available, the housing authority will often cooperate with the ABE program by posting notices of classes and arranging for whatever specialized facilities are needed.

The *civil defense program* provides instruction and reading materials. The state or local civil defense coordinator (or any qualified civil defense instructor) can speak to the class on such topics as medical self-help, survival in natural disasters, and survival in case of atomic attack. The program is also a valuable source of free reading materials.

The *Cooperative Extension Service* provides lecturers, demonstrations, and instructional materials. Home economics extension personnel will demonstrate and teach many aspects of home management such as sewing or the preparation of attractive, nutritious, and economical meals either as a part of the ABE class or as a separate program for those who are interested. The Service also has a large collection of reading materials, many of which are written in simplified form for basic education students.

The *JOBS* (*J*ob Opportunities in the *B*usiness *S*ector) program grew out of President Johnson's 1968 Manpower Message to the Congress, when he asked, "The question of our day is this: In an economy capable of sustaining high employment, how can we assure every American, who is willing to work, the right to earn a living?" The National Alliance of Businessmen received its charter and its goal from that Manpower Message: to find jobs for the hard-core unemployed. The task of the Alliance is to encourage private companies to put 100,000 men and women on the job by June 1969, and 500,000 by June 1971. The aptly named JOBS program is called the MA-3 program by the Manpower Administration of the Department of Labor.

The 50 largest cities in the country will participate in this program. In each of the 50 cities, a prominent businessman has been named as metropolitan chairman of the Alliance to work in conjunction with a regional chairman in each of the eight Department of Labor regions. Since the hard-core unemployed will be less qualified than those the employer normally hires, they will generally require extensive training, counseling, and other individual services. These costs will be paid by the government as part of the national manpower program.

The 75 communities selected to participate in the *Model Cities* program range from 5,000 to 8,000,000 in population. Made possible through Title I of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966, this program is designed to demonstrate how the living environment and the general welfare of people living in blighted neighborhoods can be substantially improved through a comprehensive attack on social, economic, and physical problems. The program recognizes that this improvement can come about only through a concentration and coordination of federal, state, and local public and private efforts.

In each Model City, a planning group known as the City Demonstration Agency (CDA) is responsible for drawing up and carrying out the comprehensive plan. The program is funded at an 80:20 federal-local ratio. Each Model City must have a full-time local director, and each program must have an educational component. The federal guidelines specifically state concerning education:

> The local program should be designed to make marked progress in reducing educational disadvantage and to provide educational services necessary to serve the poor and disadvantaged in the area. . . . Adults lacking basic educational skills and adequate work skills also may need special services. . . . The school board and city government should develop close working relationships so that educational efforts are linked effectively with all service delivery systems, such as health, welfare, rehabilitation and recreation.

OEO Programs

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 created the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) with broad powers to conduct educational and vocational programs designed to help the poor help themselves.

Local community action programs provide tailor-made local services such as recruiting, providing teacher aides, and conducting nurseries. In some areas, they offer high school equivalency programs. Community action programs are the greatest potential source of aid to ABE programs because they are staffed by local people and are responsive to local conditions. There is virtually no limit to the variety of services which can be worked out with the local agency.

Project Head Start will be of interest to parents in ABE programs with preschool children. The Head Start program, administered by the local community action program, provides preschool education to deprived children from ages 3 to 6 so that they will be able to profit more from first-grade public school education. Programs for parents are often conducted in the same location (or parents may be referred to ABE classes) so that they will be in a better position to help their children keep the head start they have acquired.

The *legal services program* provides legal services and ensures the full protection of the law for the poor.

The *Job Corps* provides job training to young men and women. Aside from trying to make disadvantaged young people employable, the Jobs Corps encourages them to return to school, get a job, or join the armed forces after training is completed. ABE teachers may want to refer some of their younger students to the Job Corps and should keep older students informed of the opportunities it offers their children.

Volunteer Agencies and Civic Groups

Local religious groups can provide teacher aides, operate nurseries, donate classrooms, or provide other forms of assistance. Local churches and synagogues—particularly their women's auxiliaries—are often looking for worthwhile community projects and will usually be anxious to help the ABE program if they are made aware of its needs. Many religious groups can donate classroom space which may be more appealing and more centrally located than a classroom in the local elementary school.

The *Red Cross and Salvation Army* can extend emergency help to students. Persons who need food, clothing, shelter, or other essentials because of a natural disaster or some form of personal catastrophe, can obtain help from these agencies while government agencies or insurance companies are investigating their claims. The local Red Cross can also provide instruction in medical self-help, first aid, baby care for expectant parents, and related subjects.

Many *civic groups and clubs* are anxious to begin community improvement projects and will welcome the chance to assist ABE programs. For example, Lions Clubs have provided eye care and glasses to thousands of indigent people.

Children's and family service agencies provide family counseling. The state department of family and children's services, as well as other agencies specializing in this area, will visit the homes of students or offer counseling in the agency's offices. Services vary from one community to the other, but they should be made known to ABE students by a speaker from the agency or a class visit to it.

Garden clubs can provide speakers on yard care, all aspects of horticulture, and civic improvement. The state chairman on horticulture or the state chairman on civic improvement will be glad to refer ABE teachers to competent speakers who can help students to beautify their homes or streets, plant gardens, or launch paint-up and clean-up campaigns.

The *League of Women Voters* provides information about voter registration, candidates and issues in elections, community agencies, and other facts about citizenship. While each local league has its own projects, citizenship education of the deprived is an overall interest of all their groups. The local league might undertake a special project to help ABE students or could provide speakers and literature (such as political directories) about all aspects of the community's political life to help students understand how they can become participating, voting citizens.

Planned parenthood associations can provide literature and speakers. Local planned parenthood groups can provide professional speakers on birth control to address the class, or they will provide personal instruction and counseling to those students who are interested in more information on birth control methods.

There are many other groups which have had years of experience working with disadvantaged people and which can give assistance to the ABE teacher or class. However, finding these helpful persons and involving them in the basic education program is, in most cases, the job of ABE administrators and teachers. The teacher, on his own or through administrative channels, must make his needs known and must convince local organizations that their assistance is both necessary and welcome.

Business and Professional Groups

Medical and dental societies can set up clinics and provide speakers. Some can be persuaded to examine ABE students at the school. Individual doctors or dentists may speak to the class about health, hygiene, and related subjects.

The *Legal Aid Society* provides legal services and information. Sponsored by local bar associations or law schools, legal aid societies can provide free legal services and advice for those who are unable to pay for it. A spokesman for the local society can explain the group's services to the ABE class as well as provide general information about legal rights of citizens.

Labor unions will recruit students and help in a variety of ways. Local labor organizations have long been interested in adult basic education. Their education officers often serve on lay advisory committees of ABE programs and stand ready to contribute time, money, or facilities to help the program in some appropriate way.

Private business and industry may give students time off and may provide free literature, as well as encourage class tours. Business and industry have recently become interested in adult education. They may be able to provide a variety of reading materials and other equipment or supplies for the program. They also help the teacher plan class visits to their plants or offices.

Although Miss Brown undoubtedly felt reassured after looking at her list, she soon discovered that it was not an end in itself. True, there is comfort in knowing that a wide variety of individuals and agencies share the ABE teacher's concern for disadvantaged students and that they are willing to help make the ABE program successful. However, the question of how to use this information still remains. Knowing the telephone number of the welfare department is one thing. Knowing how to use its services is quite another matter.

It is obvious, for example, that the very length of Miss Brown's list presents a problem. There are overlapping functions and services among agencies, and, conversely, there are specialized services with gaps between them. Services specifically aimed at women or children or breadwinners ideally should be woven together to serve the family as a whole.

There are agencies dispensing food, health care, job training, counseling, money, or advice—all of which services would be more profitable to the recipient if presented in some integrated form. It is also reasonable to hope that the agency providing counseling or food would be aware of the activities of the agency providing health care or job training.

Those who have been concerned with this situation for some time have advocated, by way of remedy, the "total agency approach" and the "total family approach." Their goal is to get all agencies working with and for the deprived adult to pool their resources and strive toward a common final goal: the eradication of poverty and ignorance. The immediate objective should be to provide a total program of health, education, and welfare for the entire family unit.

At the present time, such cooperation and coordination have not yet been perfected. Although most agencies see the need for cooperative effort, they are often hamstrung by organizational red tape or inflexible operating procedures. There is, for example, the simple requirement that each government agency account for the expenditure of all its funds—a procedure which becomes a bookkeeper's nightmare if funds and functions are pooled creatively.

Nevertheless, the comprehensive approach seems to be the only reasonable or effective way of fighting a total war on poverty. As the Head Start program has demonstrated so well, piecemeal tactics will not win that war. A child who has received large doses of cultural enrichment in the Head Start program cannot be expected to keep that lead when he returns to the same deprived family and neighborhood which caused his problem.

Unless parents are educated with their children, the "head start" will consist of one jump forward and two jumps backward. To prevent this unfortunate occurrence, children of adult students should be referred to the Head Start program and parents of Head Start children should be referred to ABE programs. This procedure has been followed in many communities and should be encouraged in many more.

There are additional examples of successful, productive teamwork between ABE programs and other agencies. For instance, the Work-Study Program, funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity and administered by the Welfare Department, is designed to train parents with dependent children to be self-supporting jobholders. In some cases, where the parent's educational level is very low, gainful employment is almost out of the question. The Welfare Department refers these persons to the ABE program—often arranging part-time jobs for them and day care for their smaller children—until they have reached fourth- or fifth-grade level. They can then resume their job training full-time.

One school system used the "total agency approach" in planning an elementary school close to a migrant camp. The school was planned to provide for adult education programs, health services, a community recreation center, a dental office, a counseling center, and other essential services. Any agency which served the migrant camp was invited to help pay for and plan a portion of the building for its particular functions. ABE students in the migrant camp remodeled a vacant building so it could be used for emergency housing for sick or destitute migrants.

Again, while it will not be the teacher's job to plan such large-scale, cooperative ventures, he will make his contribution by utilizing the assistance of community agencies, helping coordinate their services, referring students to appropriate programs of other agencies, and keeping himself and the students informed about the many options available to every member of a disadvantaged family.

Aside from the more obvious benefits to students and teacher, the student, as well as his teacher, will be reassured to discover that his sense of isolation and impotence is not justified. Moreover, his familiarity with the services of a concerned community will give him more than help and reassurance. It may help the uneducated adult renew his faith in the society which has rejected him and may even rekindle his willingness to accept that society's goals and standards as his own.

Chapter 7

Materials for Learning and Teaching

If the goal of literacy training were simply to learn to read the Bible, the newspaper, or a carpentry manual, the selection of materials would pose no great problem. The task would dictate the materials to be used. But today "adult basic education" reaches out beyond mere literacy. The task—the development of a totally functioning person—calls for a more complex set of tools.

Everything known about the goals of adult education, as well as the goals of the adult student, has implications for the selection of teaching materials. The goals of adult education, for instance, dictate that a wide range of subject matter must be taught through the materials students use to learn basic skills. What is known about the undereducated adult suggests that the material must be practical, relevant to here-and-now situations, and suited to individual interests and abilities.

Common sense indicates that reading materials for students should be chosen with the same care given to choosing books for friends. One takes into account the age, sex, occupation, hobbies, reading level, and all the social and geographic factors of the person and then chooses the book that will be hardest to put down.

Obviously, selecting educational materials for an entire class will require a substantial investment of knowledge, patience, and time on the part of the teacher. It is his job to sort out the many requirements posed by the course and the students and to try to apply them to the materials available.

There are two shortcuts which have been and may still be used. A few school systems have adopted a certain set of materials for systemwide use; some teachers use one basic text for all their classes. Unfortunately, both of these shortcuts represent short routes to disaster rather than to education. No one book or set of materials could possibly be profitable to every member of a class, much less a whole school system.

To begin, it is important to define the rather large word *materials* as used in this chapter. It is intended to mean, in general, any object or device which will aid the teacher or the student. More specifically, it encompasses the more formal teaching tools such as readings ranging from a newspaper clipping to a book, audiovisual and other instructional equipment, and programed instruction from workbooks to teaching machines. This definition of materials also includes those impromptu devices which are selected or prepared by the teacher. These would range from tax forms to toothbrushes and from maps to measuring cups—as far as the teacher's ingenuity permits.

Perhaps the most logical way of choosing materials is to look first at the materials already available on the market, choose the best of these, and then balance and supplement them with materials which the teacher collects or prepares himself. Because the materials available for adults are quite often inappropriate for elementary reading levels (and not necessarily in tune with the special interests of adults at higher reading levels), total reliance on commercial materials will hardly ever be the best course.

Choosing from Published Materials

In the early days of adult education, students used reading materials created for children. Occasionally, the cover was changed and the word *adult* was substituted for the designation *fourth grade*. For many reasons, this was less than adequate. Many primers had stories which were inane to some children, much less full-grown adults.

As time went on and the demand for truly adult material grew, pioneer efforts at creating readings for adults were made. Some were outstanding—and some were based on questionable methods of teaching reading. Most of the latter have disappeared, but teachers should remain alert to the possibility that unscrupulous publishers still put forth untried schemes for teaching reading. In fact, every publisher's materials reflect that firm's particular bias or view of teaching, and its offerings should be examined with that fact in mind.

Of all the published materials available today, the wisest choice for teaching reading will be one of the series of so-called supplemental reading materials (also called reading laboratories). They encompass a wide range of adult subject matter, including social studies and science, and are graded by reading levels. These series of publications are varied enough both to be interesting and appropriate to individual members of the class and to fulfill the requirement of teaching subject matter while teaching reading.

Relatively little skill is required to teach with them, but it will take some experience to learn to use them to the best advantage. Although their initial cost is high, they last a long time. The only perishable items are the comprehension tests which students write on. But these can be duplicated (if they are not copyrighted) and used over and over again.

In any case, a variety of books and other readings, coded according to reading difficulty, should be provided for students on all reading levels. In addition, at least 10 books per student should be available for supplementary reading.

While textbooks or workbooks may be suitable for some teaching situations, they should be chosen carefully and used judiciously. Childish ones with too many rote exercises and drills do not measure up to adult education standards. Furthermore, they remind the adult student of the more discouraging aspects of his childhood schooling which he failed—and which failed him.

Workbooks specifically designed for adults do have their place in the adult classroom if they are used properly. They contain useful exercises for students at all levels and give the teacher free time for personalized instruction.

Instead of handing out the workbooks themselves, the teacher should tear out the particular pages which each student will work on. This prevents the student from knowing (and perhaps worrying about) the grade level of the work he is doing. He also has a smaller unit of work to do, one which is more manageable and more satisfying than the sight of a book full of work yet to be done.

A new kind of workbook for adult students has been designed to provide programed instruction by means of self-testing devices. Material is presented in small sequential steps, which move gradually from basic knowledge to more difficult concepts. Using some technique to cover up the answers on the page, the student responds to the questions or choices given and then checks to see if he is right or wrong. If he is right, he goes on to the next problem. If he is wrong, he goes on to another set of choices which attempts to teach him the same material through alternate approaches.

This type of programed instruction may be the hope of the future. It has all the advantages of self-teaching methods: The student moves ahead at his own rate, he does not compete with others, and the teacher has more free time to work with individuals.

But, at the present time, this hope has not yet become a reality. While the concept itself is a good one, it is largely unexplored, and the techniques for its application have not yet become sophisticated or helpful enough. Many of the programs which have thus far been worked out fall short of being either adequate or interesting to adults. In addition, although many skills can be programed for adults who can read on a third-grade level or higher, so far the technique offers little for those who are just beginning to read.

More information about materials and their relationship to methods of teaching will be found in the chapter on teaching reading. But one last observation should be made here about published materials: Books chosen for reading aloud to the students, especially those in the first throes of learning to read, should captivate an audience. They must convince the students that books are a joy and that reading them is a delight reserved for those who take the trouble to learn. One teacher got this point across successfully when he read *The Old Man and the Sea* to a spellbound class.

Further information about materials is available from the National Association of Public School Adult Education (NAPSAE), which publishes books and periodicals for teachers. Among these is *Techniques for Teachers of Adults,* a monthly newsletter which often contains helpful ideas about materials. Initial screening of publications can also be made easier by studying some of the annotated bibliographies at the end of this book.

Selecting Educational Hardware

Although educational technology is not quite in step with space technology, a sizable number of specialized machines for learning and teaching have been put on the market in recent years. Ever since federal, state, and local funds have become available for purchasing educational hardware, manufacturers have responded by developing all sorts of electronic and electric devices.

In general, adult education has profited from this new trend. Experimental media centers already in operation are staging a dress rehearsal of the ABE teaching program of the future.

There is on the market, for example, a kind of hybrid tape recorder called the Language Master, used mainly for teaching speech sounds with prepared tapes. The student hears the sound and repeats it as well as he can. His response is recorded on the tape and is replayed so that he can compare it with the programed tape. The student's responses can be erased without damaging the programed material, and the tape can be used over and over again. The same procedure is possible using a lesson taped by the teacher.

The videotape recorder is another exciting new device with much promise for the future. In essence, it is a miniature television station—one self-contained unit which includes both the camera and the screen. Until now, it has been used mostly for teacher training, but it can be put to practical use in ABE classrooms when the system is large enough to support the cost, schedule its use, and train the teachers in ways it can be used to help students see and hear themselves as others hear and see them.

Perhaps it should become the role of state departments of education to buy, field test, and demonstrate new equipment so that individual low-budget programs can make purchases with less risk. In the meantime, each teacher will have to investigate carefully. He must check the value, the initial cost, the cost of maintenance, and the effectiveness of each piece of equipment. Then he must judge the cost and effectiveness of alternate methods.

At present, the old standbys are still the best value for each equipment dollar—the overhead projector, the tape recorder, the 16mm movie projector, and the record player. The overhead projector is particularly versatile and is a must for any ABE classroom. Teachers who have learned to prepare and mount overlays can flash clippings or any other prepared materials on the screen or wall. Tape recorders are a valuable asset in teaching disadvantaged adults to speak and understand good English. Prerecorded tapes are available, and many are helpful.

It is entirely possible that one day there will be media centers for adult basic education where language and language skills will be taught through taped programs in much the same way that foreign languages are taught today. Cognitive subjects may be taught with the help of computers and lessons videotaped by master teachers. Only those highly personal and individual aspects of the ABE program which elude the technologists will be handled by teachers and counselors.

However, education will always be the province of the skilled teacher, regardless of the amount of technological assistance he has at his command. This is certainly true today, when much educational hardware is still being perfected.

Collecting and Preparing Materials

If necessity is the mother of invention, imagination may well be the father. Most teachers will find it necessary to collect—and invent—their own materials.

What sorts of items should be collected? Some of the current materials and concrete objects which teachers have found useful include household objects such as measuring cups and spoons for teaching science or math (especially weight and measurement), checkbooks, city and county maps, tax forms, bus schedules, pamphlets from drug companies about prenatal or child care, election ballots, play food, and cosmetic kits.

What might be called the pack-rat technique is a useful way of accumulating materials day by day. Because the teacher's collection may begin to resemble a little boy's top drawer as items are added, there should be some effort at categorizing the contents. Items may be coded and filed by subject, readability level, and any other helpful designation. Some items may be duplicated for use by the entire class.

One ABE teacher had a student—a custodian in an apartment house—collect and bring to class old telephone books when the new books came out. By looking up different names, students learned how to use a dictionary. The yellow pages were an endless source of information about the community. Among other things, students learned about the services of different businesses and government agencies, found out where the health department was located, and discovered the library.

Teachers have long realized that the local newspaper is a virtual cornucopia of teaching materials. Often free copies can be obtained for each member of the class. Shopping lists made from the food advertisements are a practical way of teaching nutrition, mathematics, and writing. Recipes, too, offer practical arithmetic problems as well as good homemaking advice. Fractions, decimals, ounces, and dollars mean more when discussed in terms of quarter-pounds of butter or comparisons of two cans of peas at different prices. The news columns lend themselves to helpful discussions about the responsibilities of citizenship.

Want ads, articles on local politics, advertisements, speeches on important local or national issues—all these are found in the newspaper ready to be read, discussed, and used to teach various subjects. For students with little reading ability, articles in magazines—especially those appealing to individuals interested in sports, auto mechanics, and the like—are also a good source, although they may have to be rewritten by the teacher and presented in a more simplified version. This rewriting may also be necessary when informative pamphlets from business, industry, or government are used as teaching materials.

Local small-town weeklies have the double advantage of being easy to read and appealing to the students. "Comic books" (there are good ones dealing with nonviolent themes and on an adult interest level) should not be discriminated against if they entice a student to begin reading.

Somewhere there is probably a teacher of such high caliber that he can teach without any materials at all. Next in line is his creative colleague who can ignore the publishers and the educational technologists and rely entirely on his own collection of materials. The great majority of ABE teachers, however, will probably take advantage of whatever teaching aids are available and try to use them to best advantage.

Ideally, the teacher will employ many kinds of materials on different subjects and from diverse sources. The classroom will have a plentiful supply of readings for every reading level; at least one comprehensive set of supplemental readings (reading laboratory); a tape recorder; an overhead projector; and access to a filmstrip projector, a 16mm projector, and perhaps a videotape recorder.

The teacher will try to get copies of the local newspapers and magazines of specialized interest for class. He will make, borrow, collect, or rewrite appropriate materials. He will encourage students to bring to class things which interest them. If, in addition to this, the teacher keeps informed of new developments and ideas for teaching materials, there will probably be very few empty moments or empty chairs in his class.

Chapter 8

Teaching Communication

When a child sees "that look" and hears the door slam, he is likely to say, "Are you mad, Mama?" Or, another time, when the company leaves, the comment might be, "He's nice. He smiled a lot, and he liked my funny story." In both cases, the child has reached a conclusion—probably the right one—without a word's being uttered. The smile or frown, the helpful or angry gesture—all communicate in a silent language which most people (and even the more domesticated animals) understand.

Novelists and movie makers use the silent language as part of their stock in trade. It would be an unusual book or movie which tried to create an atmosphere or delineate a character by conversation and narrative alone. Imagine *Wuthering Heights* set in Harlem!

In fact, all of us use this silent language of gesture and inference to make the impression we want to make and to "read" other people. Although this reading is often unfair, we do categorize people by their appearance, their possessions, their homes, their jobs, and whether or not they go to church.

The disadvantaged adult relies particularly heavily on the silent language of gesture, expression, bearing, and appearance for obvious reasons—his difficulties with the more verbal and written methods of communication. Unable to read, write, speak, or listen well, he takes nonverbal shortcuts to conveying and receiving messages.

This nonverbal approach has advantages beyond its practicality. The deprived person may have the novelist's eye for physical details; a symbolic, almost poetic pattern of speech (an old Negro once expressed his happiness by saying, "It's like bein' in heaven, sittin' down"); and a highly developed sixth sense which is a combination of intuition and insight.

The teacher should realize his students' lack of formal communication skills and should utilize appropriate teaching techniques which take advantage of their sixth sense and their love of concrete detail and imagery. Advanced reading classes, for example, can be introduced to literature and literary techniques which capitalize on these forms of silent communication. The teacher can count on a receptive audience when he plays program music (such as *Peter and the Wolf*) or reads narrative poetry full of imagery. Many students will be able to write poetry or stories of their own.

It will doubtless be a source of pride and relief to the disadvantaged student to find out that his lack of ability in the formal communication skills has its compensating factors. And the teacher will find the students' talents a wellspring of creative classroom work. Since the teacher is charged with developing the potential of the whole person, there is no reason to ignore the student's literary or aesthetic sense in the big push for literacy.

All the communication skills, whether verbal or nonverbal, are at the heart of the ABE program. From a practical point of view, mastery of the spoken and written word will permit the student to reap some of the social and financial benefits of a communication-conscious middle class. The disadvantaged person who can read, write, comprehend the spoken word, and have his words understood clearly by others immediately has fewer strikes against him. Unless he acquires these skills, the dialect, gestures, and symbols he uses in his speech will be understood by few people except those in his small cultural subgroup.

So, written communication must be taught and taught well. It has been said that the average person spends 42 percent of his day listening, 32 percent speaking, 15 percent reading, and 11 percent writing. This fact gives some indication of the relative usefulness of the communication skills. The order of frequency with which they are used is also the order in which they should be learned.

Listening

Although hearing is a physical, automatic response to sounds, the ability to listen is a conscious, learned process. Unlike hearing, listening implies selectivity, concentration, and comprehension. The fact that people hear so many sounds all day long, many of them unwelcome to their ears, may account for the defenses built up against them. The disadvantaged, who often live and work in crowded, noisy surroundings, have probably spent the better part of their lives unconsciously teaching themselves to ignore sounds. In addition, because their communication is largely without words, they have not had much opportunity to cultivate good listening habits.

Even the so-called average person listens at about 25 percent efficiency—a rate which goes up to 50 percent when he is trying. And yet the ability to listen is the keystone to all the communicative skills. A student who comprehends what he hears is well on the road toward learning to read and speak well, which in turn will make writing easier. Conversely, the inability to listen well is one of the biggest stumbling blocks to good reading, speaking, and, consequently, writing.

Training and experience in listening to middle class English involve the same skills as those needed for reading: finding meaning in words. But because it is easier to get meaning from spoken words than from written symbols, training in listening is part of the adult's reading readiness program.

Listening skills are not only valuable in all phases of education, they can be learned in all aspects of it. Listening is such an integral part of living that it cannot be taught as a separate lesson. Training in listening must be part of the fabric of classroom procedure. The following suggestions are good rules in any event, and particularly useful in improving students' listening abilities:

1. Be sure that all students in the class can hear you. If not, the fault may lie with their hearing, the seating arrangements in the class, or the way you project your voice.

2. Be sure you have established the kind of classroom atmosphere and rapport with students which underlie good communication.

3. Don't just stand in front of the class and talk to the students too often or at length.

4. Do use a variety of materials, such as good record players, tape recorders, and movies.

5. Read aloud often from informative, entertaining books which contain new words and new concepts.

6. When introducing new methods of expression (such as poetry or classical music), tell the class what the author or composer is trying to accomplish, and explain what students should listen for.

7. Help students listen efficiently by eliminating distractions (erase the board, close the windows and doors), discouraging interruptions (schedule a special time for questions), and making all announcements slowly and clearly.

8. Evaluate students' listening skills often by asking questions about the material they have heard or by giving short tests.

9. When you do talk to the class, make sure they know you are talking to them. Look individual students straight in the eye, and be enthusiastic about what you are saying.

10. If it becomes clear that some students are suffering from a hearing loss, make arrangements to refer them to an appropriate community agency for help. In many schools, a hearing test can be arranged right in the classroom for all students.

When practice and experience in good listening have produced a skilled listener, the person can understand three or four times faster than most people talk. He can use this extra time to review what the speaker has already said, anticipate what he is going to say, and speculate on the many ramifications of his message. Of course, the skilled listener works at his trade. He is well motivated because he assumes that the speaker will say something important. His mind is alert, too, ready to hear and remember every word and every meaning.

While most students will not emerge with the listening ability of a court reporter, they will certainly improve their listening skills appreciably simply by virtue of being exposed to words for some time. If, in addition, classroom procedures are oriented toward teaching good listening habits and students are motivated to improve, their listening abilities should soon show marked improvement.

Speaking

As stated earlier, the disadvantaged student uses many substitutes for written language. The few words he does use may be a foreign-sounding combination of dialect and personal speech idiosyncracies. The words may be mumbled, swallowed, contracted, slurred together, or otherwise rendered indistinguishable.

Generally his sentences are short and simple. He does not want to challenge anyone else's capacity to listen, nor does he want to air his poor speech more than is necessary. His simple utterances are generally reserved for expressing concrete needs, somewhat like the small child whose conversation is usually restricted to "Gimme that." He seldom discusses the pros and cons of any subject, nor does he deal in abstract ideas. Chances are he has seldom had the opportunity to think this way, and his conversation reflects to some extent his undeveloped thinking habits.

Poor speech patterns are reinforced in the student's home, in his immediate community, and sometimes at work. To him they are as much a sign of belonging—a status symbol—as professional jargon is to some academicians. His is a language which no one outside his group clearly understands—an elaborate system which ensures the privacy and integrity of a special group and which serves as a wall between its members and the rest of society.

But the rest of society judges from people's manner of speaking who belongs, who will succeed, or who will get the job. The rules are that a French accent is OK but a regional dialect is not; professional jargon is in but hillbilly jargon is c In our schools, even though we know better, we continue to mea e intelligence in terms of verbal facility with middle class English.

The disadvantaged student probably knows, at least unconsciously, some of the social implications of poor speech. At the same time, he does not want to speak too differently from his family or the people in the neighborhood. Even if he wanted to, he would have trouble changing the speech habits of a lifetime in a few hours of class practice each week.

In other words, the prognosis is poor. Probably the most reasonable expectation the teacher can have is that the student will learn to understand middle class English better. He should not hope for a miracle as far as the student's own manner of speaking is concerned, although he can certainly encourage and help the student to improve.

The best technique for improving the student's speech is constant exposure to good English. Reading interesting stories, playing records or tapes, and even playing the radio can be a way of teaching how English should be spoken. Students are more apt to listen to radio and television if they can be convinced that they will hear interesting, useful information. Local news programs usually contain items of interest to almost everyone in the class.

Of course, there should also be plenty of opportunities for speaking, such as group discussions and informal oral reports by students on their favorite readings or other subjects. Students can be asked to volunteer to read announcements, instructions, newspapers, want ads, parts of books, or any other items of general interest which would ordinarily be read by the teacher or distributed in written form.

A combination of good listening habits, good speaking habits, plus some reasoning ability are the necessary stepping-stones to reading the printed word. While the teaching of reading will be covered separately in the following chapter, it can be stated here that practice in listening and speaking has the added value of being the adult student's reading readiness program. For the severely deprived adult, a fairly long reading readiness program may be necessary.

Writing

There is little, if any, research on techniques of teaching writing to adults—probably because the methods used for teaching children seem to have worked so well. Of course, the approach for adults will be tempered by the teacher's realization that his students are by no means children, but otherwise the process is similar.

The student will first have to learn how to hold a pencil and to make letters between ruled lines in a confined space. Largely a matter of coordination, this will improve with practice. As a general rule, the adult learns faster if many of his senses are involved. When he is learning to write, his sense of touch can be enlisted to help his eyes and ears.

While he is improving his coordination, he will also be learning to recognize and write letters from memory. This leads to writing words, which, in turn, leads eventually to expressing thoughts by joining many words together.

Manuscript writing (forming letters that look like printing) is usually taught first because it is simpler. The letters correspond to those the student learns in reading. In addition, there are only three basic strokes in manuscript writing: a straight line, a circle, and a half circle. Manuscript writing can therefore be learned and read more easily than cursive (ordinary writing) and will be easier for the student to write legibly.

The first step is usually writing the most important word in the English language: the student's own name. The teacher writes the name of the student with a stylus (or other sharp instrument) on soft paper. The student then traces it with a soft lead pencil which glides easily across the paper until he can do it from memory. Practice periods should be short—not more than two to five minutes long at first. As students become more proficient and less tense, the practice time can be gradually lengthened.

When the student has learned to write his name with ease, he can be encouraged to write short, useful sentences. Emphasis here is on the word *useful*. Everything the student writes should have a purpose. Meaningless writing exercises have no place in an adult classroom, where students are trying to learn a method of expressing thoughts on paper.

The transition to cursive writing should come when the student is fairly relaxed printing short sentences. Begin by showing the student the difference between manuscript and cursive writing. Cursive letters are slanted and joined, each letter has a short flourish on the end, and the pencil is not lifted from the paper. The student then learns the alphabet, learns to recognize capitals and lowercase letters, and practices reading cursive writing from posters or books. He is then ready to begin short practice sessions.

Part of the teacher's job is to help the adult sit properly in a relaxed position, with the paper at the right angle and the correct grip on the pencil. Both teacher and students should write on the board frequently.

After the teacher has pointed out mistakes, the student should be encouraged to analyze and correct them. In general, writing should be evaluated for the legibility, not the beauty, of the finished product. Some training in spelling can be part of the writing lesson. Capitalization and punctuation rules can also be introduced if they are presented as useful devices for clarifying the meaning. Formal theories of grammar are taboo in the adult basic education classes at this stage.

Aside from the more apparent benefits of being able to write one's own name, a shopping list, or a letter, the ability to write reinforces speech and reading skills. The cycle of learning goes round and round, beginning with good listening habits. Listening leads to reading and speaking, which lead to writing, and so on back to speech and reading again.

The entire communication process consists of related units of knowledge which contribute to each other. In individualized teaching, each student's communication problems will be different, but each can be reached by at least one of the units of instruction. He may learn reading from listening or writing from speaking. If he is blocked in one area, he can always learn through another approach.

The important thing is for the teacher to keep in mind the many possible approaches and to make full use of them all. It is all too easy to forget that reading and writing are only two of four communication skills.

It is also easy to forget that communication skills are useless if there is nothing to communicate. The students must be taught using useful subject matter, so they can become used to receiving and expressing thoughts on a variety of subjects. The student who can write "The ball is blue" is, for all intents and purposes, just as illiterate as he was before. The student who can write "Register to vote on Thursday" is on his way.

Chapter 9

Teaching Reading

Many teachers who have taught both children and adults are of the opinion that an adult, even a disadvantaged adult, can learn to read far more quickly than most children. He is better equipped for the task by virtue of having talked, listened, and lived so much longer. He is more strongly motivated, is better able to concentrate, has a bigger vocabulary, has a better visual and auditory memory, and has better developed abilities to hear and see small refinements of sound and shape.

He knows, too, what a word is and that writing is language written down. Although he does not know how to read or write, he does know that reading is the rapid translation of written word-symbols into meaning. He probably is familiar with the alphabet and a few simple words learned from frequent exposure.

For these reasons, few adults need an extensive reading readiness program. However, learning to read will not be an effortless process for the disadvantaged adult. There will still be stumbling blocks. The physically oriented, culturally deprived person will not be used to dealing with the abstractions of language and often has difficulties in comprehension. On the other hand, his eventual mastery of difficult material will improve his ability to think in a more abstract, sophisticated way.

His limited vocabulary and poor diction will also interfere with smooth progress. Undoubtedly some members of the class will require practice in sound discrimination so that they can hear that *fan* rhymes with *man* and that *leaf* is different from *leave*.

The disadvantaged student's difficulty in this area stems from his use of dialect, slang, or some other personal version of the English language. He may have to become accustomed to speaking and hearing middle class American. In the meantime, he may not understand the teacher and may have difficulty reconciling what he calls *guvmint* with the written word *government*.

All in all, however, most teachers accustomed to teaching children will be amazed at the progress made by their adult students. They will also find that, while the student is often having a relatively easy time, the job of the uninitiated teacher is usually relatively more difficult. It will become abundantly clear early in the game that the teacher needs special knowledge to teach reading, the heart of the ABE program.

His task is made more complex when he realizes that he is actually teaching communication. Reading, speaking, writing, listening, and critical thinking are all part of one package—the communication system. In addition, the reading instruction must be designed to teach facts and concepts about citizenship, homemaking, vocations, and being a parent and a consumer. Therefore, he will not be only teaching reading in the narrow sense of the word. And, of course, the teacher's knowledge of disadvantaged adults as people will be needed for good verbal communication which, in turn, is a prerequisite for teaching them to learn to read.

The reading teacher is therefore teaching reading, general communication skills, and a variety of subjects to a variety of people, all of whom may have different levels of academic ability and reading skill. He will have to know a great deal about the reading and learning objectives of his students, about testing their reading ability and present potential, about selecting and preparing materials, and about techniques for presenting them to individual students.

Fortunately, the teaching of reading is a field about which adult educators have amassed a reassuringly large amount of knowledge and experience on which the teacher can draw. There exist reasonably accurate ways of assessing the ability of students and the readability of materials. He has at his disposal a variety of approaches, techniques, teaching aids, and publications with which to embark on this journey to literacy. He will find, too, that his students make good traveling companions. Their excitement and pride will do much to make a difficult task an enjoyable one.

Testing the Student's Reading Ability and Potential

In most schools, instruction is divided on three different levels which correspond to the eight grade levels of elementary school. Level I is introductory; Level II is elementary; and Level III is intermediate. However, as every teacher knows, all children in the third grade are not necessarily doing third-grade work or third-grade reading. A more refined method of classification is required within the broad framework of teaching levels.

A specific assessment of each student's reading ability, present and potential, will help the teacher choose appropriate materials and teaching techniques for each one. This assessment must be made when the students first enter the class so that individualized instruction can proceed from there. Those who enter the class at a later time should be evaluated immediately. Reassessment of all students should take place at regular intervals to determine their rate of progress and to adjust methods and materials to their new level of performance.

Two types of informal tests are recommended for use—(a) at the beginning of the program to assess the instructional level (I, II, or III) for placing the student and to determine his potential reading ability at that time and (b) to assess his present reading ability. A (10-minute) word recognition test and a simple oral reading test can usually be used to give at least a general determination of all of these.

A short word recognition test consisting of graded lists of words may be used to determine initial placement in the reading program in the first, second, or third reading level. The same test may be used to determine the student's instructional level, independent reading level, and frustration level so that appropriate teaching techniques and materials can be selected. Because standards for these levels differ somewhat from children to adults, the adult standards are presented here.

The instructional level will be that level at which the student recognizes most of the words on the word recognition test but fails to recognize or grossly mispronounces a few. In terms of reading, he can recognize more than 90 percent of the words in a selection instantly and can read smoothly with good comprehension and without showing undue stress. He should need help with no more than 5 percent of the words. Errors should be noted, but language difficulties (mispronounciations, endings added or omitted, and so forth) stemming from cultural deprivation should not be counted in the 5 percent. Some will cause the same errors on all levels of material and thus would appear to have no instructional level. Here teacher judgment is a vital ingredient in finding the proper instructional level.

At a later date, when the student feels more secure in the ABE program, he can be retested with graded paragraphs to determine his new instructional level. The student is usually asked to read one paragraph orally and another silently at each grade level of readability. However, initial testing should be done with the word recognition test, because this can be accomplished more quickly and with less anxiety to the student.

The student's independent reading level is one grade level below the instructional level. He can instantly recognize more than 95 percent of the words in reading material at this level, can understand it easily, and can read it aloud smoothly. However, habitual mispronunciations, omissions of endings, and so forth should not be penalized but should be corrected.

The frustration level, on the other hand, is one grade level higher than the instructional level. When reading material at the frustration level, the student may hold a book very close to his face or point with his finger to the words, and his voice may either rise in pitch or decrease in volume to a mumble. Material at the student's frustration level is too difficult to be handled pleasurably or profitably and should obviously be avoided.

Determination of the student's "present" potential ("present" because it will increase as his education progresses) is a most important part of the initial testing program. Using graded paragraphs, the teacher reads aloud to the student in order to find out the highest level of graded reading material he can comprehend orally. That level represents his potential capacity for reading at that time. This assumption is made on the theory that writing is merely printed speech. If a student can understand what is read at a certain grade level, he will presumably be able to read at that level once he has acquired the necessary reading skills.

The use of graded paragraphs to determine a student's capacity to learn to read is preferable to a verbal intelligence test. Intelligence tests tend to be oriented to middle class vocabulary and knowledge. In addition, they test for knowledge of general information and other capabilities which do not necessarily apply to the student's future ability to learn to read.

While a standardized test should not be used when the adult first enters the program, once he has demonstrated some progress, he can be tested periodically with standardized tests to determine how far he has come. It is recommended that a test with several forms be used so that a different form can be used for each testing period. It is also recommended that the student be given some experience in taking standardized tests before the results are taken seriously. Otherwise a student may be tested on how to take a test rather than on the skills the test is supposed to assess.

Teaching Levels

In terms of skills learned and the readability levels of materials used, Level I, the introductory stage, is similar to the first three grades of school. It is probably the most difficult level for both student and teacher. At this stage, the adult learns to recognize several thousand words already in his listening vocabulary—words whose meaning he understands. He also learns word attack skills so that he can teach himself to read words he has not studied in class.

Word attack skills are those techniques which the student can use to figure out for himself a word he does not recognize. Teach the student to identify unfamiliar words by referring to the illustration, by studying the length of the word, by sounding it out "phonetically," or by getting clues from the sentence or context in which it is used. Teach these skills and let students apply them before they begin independent reading. Observe students when reading to see if they use unfamiliar words, and provide whatever corrective work is needed at the beginning of the next session. Don't stop a student in the middle of a page or selection to teach him a reading skill!

At any level, to avoid embarrassment and discouragement, students should not be asked to read in front of the class until they are familiar enough with the material so that they will make few mistakes. They should also be familiar enough with their classmates so that they are not chagrined about even those few mistakes. The adult should read to himself before reading aloud to the class, and he should do his classroom oral reading voluntarily. At all costs, students must not be embarrassed.

During his silent reading, have the student point to troublesome words. Tell him what the words are, and then help him make a list of them for further study. After he has studied them, ask what part of the word gave him trouble. His answers may pinpoint his problems and indicate the teaching techniques needed to help him. Don't worry if the student mumbles or moves his lips during "silent" reading. These bad reading habits will disappear when greater reading proficiency is attained.

All students in the class have practical reasons for wanting to learn to read. Although learning to read for enjoyment is certainly one of the objectives of the reading program and acquiring the skill of reading is in itself a rewarding occupation, the teacher should constantly direct the student's attention to the practical purposes of his reading. The student should know in advance why he is reading something and what he expects to get out of it, so that his motivation will be reinforced and he will acquire early the habit of reading to learn.

In most cases, new words should be presented orally first and then in a written context which carries a message and illustrates its use and meaning. Read the sentence aloud to show how the word sounds. Later, if necessary, use the word in isolation, in phrases, or in other sentences.

Materials simple enough for use at the first part of Level I are still somewhat scarce and often not completely satisfactory. Selection may be difficult because there may be insufficient materials available to choose from. Then, too, publishers tend to underestimate the complexity of materials they label as appropriate for Level I, so teachers will be wise to decide for themselves which materials are appropriate at this stage. Fortunately, this is not a difficult process. After some

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experience with readability formulas, most teachers will be able to recognize appropriate materials with little difficulty.

However, because so few books meet all the criteria for easy reading on the first level, teachers often have to rely in part on materials they or their students devise. Methods for preparing such supplementary materials will be presented later in this chapter. It should be noted here that it is easy to discourage and thus lose adults at this point if the reading materials are too difficult. In fact, it is frequently desirable to choose readings at or even below the student's instructional reading level so that his efforts will be rewarded with immediate success and encouragement. Once he has learned that he can learn to read, more difficult material can be introduced.

There are millions of adults in the United States reading at the elementary level—Level II—which is comparable to readability levels 4, 5, and 6. Having mastered the mechanical aspects of reading, they can now respond automatically to most of the *1,000 most frequently used words*. They can now read most of the words in books, magazines, or newspapers of average complexity. They can certainly read most of the words in this paragraph.

Students in Level II concentrate more on reading to learn than learning to read. Although reading for fluency is still practiced, the greater emphasis now is on interpretation and comprehension. The student also needs to continue building his reading vocabulary so that he can recognize the thousands of less frequently used words necessary to get the full meaning of adult reading material. A student whose reading ability has not reached the end of the second stage cannot cope with ordinary newspapers and magazines and cannot derive sufficient meaning or satisfaction from books. Consequently, he does not practice reading and soon loses the skill entirely from disuse.

Upon reaching Level II, the student can be weaned away from textbooks and his heavy dependence on the teacher. He is ready (and should be encouraged) to work independently on reading of his own choosing. He should be guided in selecting books he can read for pleasure or information. Because he is now more than ever reading to learn, the teacher should provide the vocational readings the student needs and wants. Materials which deal with various occupations should be acquired. Simplified versions of publications used in vocational training can be prepared by the teacher.

A substantial part of each class period should be set aside for independent reading of this kind. Students should be encouraged to share their enthusiasm for favorite parts of their reading in oral reports to the class. But written book reports should never be required because they tend to replace—and often obliterate—the student's own motivation for reading. The same can be said for outside reading and homework, both of which should also be avoided.

Whatever the reading matter used, the teacher must keep in mind that the student is not "reading" in the fullest sense of the word just because he can say the words he sees on the page. Reading should be an automatic response—a reflex action which bypasses conscious thought processes.

Therefore, work on comprehension must accompany vocabulary building. The student must learn to look for and grasp the main ideas, major and minor details, inferred meanings, and abstract thoughts in a selection. He must learn to follow directions and to accustom himself to writing which has a higher density of information and a lower density of concrete examples than the materials at Level I.

For example, the student in the introductory stage would be reading at a fairly low level of difficulty and density: "There is a bird. It is blue. It is beautiful. It is sitting on the tree. The tree is bent. The wind bent the tree." By the second level, the student should be able to grasp the meaning in a denser, more telescoped sentence: "The beautiful blue bird is sitting on the tree which was bent by the wind."

Even when an adult's reading vocabulary and fluency are sufficient to qualify him for the next level of instruction, he should not be forced to move on until he can comprehend fully the meaning of the readings at his present level.

The adult who has reached Level III, the intermediate stage, is in the transitional stage between the world of special reading materials and the real world of publications written for the general adult population. He is no longer learning to read, and he is not restricted to reading to learn. He is ready to learn to read with ease and enjoyment almost anything for almost any purpose.

To improve his comprehension of the subtle, the abstract, and even the sly use of words, he must be guided in seeking deeper and more exact meanings. He can learn to recognize devices which persuade or delude and to realize the impact of his own preconceptions on what he reads. The student will thus emerge from Level III willing and able to extract a maximum amount of pleasure and knowledge from the printed page. In the process, he has not only matured in his ability to read, but also in his ability to think.

By now the student has reached the developmental stage. He is a reader, not one who can read. He is ready to be abandoned by the reading instructor because he has become truly literate and can now develop his reading power and speed on his own. Having reached this stage of functional literacy, he is not likely to retrogress. He needs to pursue his special interests, satisfy his curiosities, build his knowledge, and simply relax with newspapers, some magazines, and many books.

Reading Methods and Their Use

There are several basic reading methods which can be used in teaching adults. Each has its merits in certain situations, but none is applicable to all students at all levels. The eclectic approach is best—a judicious mixture of methods and techniques served in individual doses by a flexible, sensitive teacher who knows the advantages of each.

The textbook and workbook are probably most familiar to elementary school teachers. Successful practice supports their use in teaching children because they present vocabulary and skills in an orderly, related way. But there is little systematic, recorded evidence on the relative merits of any materials for teaching adults. Experience has shown, however, that many textbooks written for adults seem to cover too much material in too little time. This suggests that the teacher will do well to avoid relying exclusively on texts or workbooks. Instead, several adult texts on the same readability level may be used in combination with other types of teaching materials such as programed instruction, reading kits, and audiovisual aids.

A good supplement to the textbook is material written by students themselves. Drawing on their own experiences, adults are asked to tell stories or anecdotes, either individually or as a group. The teacher becomes both secretary and editor. He helps students select appropriate words and structures the story while he writes it down on the board or on a chart. The class observes how the words in the story are written and learns to read it. An anthology of these stories can be typed (in many cases the students do the typing) and bound for use at another time or by another class.

Other techniques, such as preparation of a classroom newspaper, can be used. The emphasis of this approach is on preparing materials which are on the students' vocabulary and interest levels. The students' involvement in the process will be a source of pride which is particularly significant at the introductory level.

Once the student has progressed to the end of Level I, he can be taught effectively with materials of his own choosing. This individualized approach can be used exclusively or in combination with a standard textbook and workbook. This way of teaching, however, requires a well endowed classroom library filled with publications classified according to level of readability. Publishers' catalogs list a wide variety of reading materials for adults reading on Levels I and II.

Being careful to steer the student to books on the appropriate independent reading level because much of the reading will be done without his help, the teacher helps each student to select a book. However, the teacher should be available to help with the more difficult words, and he should schedule regular conferences with each student to try and pinpoint any weaknesses and help him overcome them.

Perhaps the ultimate in individualized instruction is good programed materials. Programed instruction allows students to teach themselves and to progress at their own rate. Instructional materials of this kind are designed to let the student know immediately whether his response is right or wrong, and they are programed to keep wrong answers at a minimum.

In spite of the obvious advantages of this kind of personalized instruction, programed instruction cannot and should not be expected to replace a teacher. For educational and psychological reasons, this method should not be used exclusively. Instead, the free time gained by the teacher should be used to give tailor-made personal instruction to individual students.

The packaged program and the reading laboratory are two other products of educational technology. The packaged programs put out by various companies consist of different combinations of materials for teaching reading, such as filmstrips, teaching machines, and classroom libraries. Reading laboratories, on the other hand, consist solely of written materials and are, in effect, carefully chosen classroom libraries. They usually consist of 50 to 200 readings on a variety of subjects, color coded by readability level. They can be used by the class as a group or by individuals in independent work. Each of the units includes exercises for developing reading skills.

While both offer a wide variety of materials in an attempt to be comprehensive, it is doubtful that any standardized program can accurately reflect the interest range and requirements of any class. Again, technology has by no means replaced the teacher, although it can give him substantial assistance.

Regardless of which materials are used and how they are combined, each classroom must have an adequate library amply stocked with reading materials on several grade levels. An adequate library for an average ABE class should contain at least 150 books, several carefully selected reading laboratories, and additional materials prepared by the teacher.

Since preparing supplementary material is often a necessity at Level I—and a good idea at any stage—some techniques for devising and evaluating it may be useful. In order to create material on his own or to choose wisely from available writings, the teacher must be familiar with the factors which make writing readable. He should also know how different levels of readability can be achieved or determined.

The ideal book would combine as many of the following factors as possible: appropriately large type, generous space between lines and in the margins, uncoated paper (to avoid glare), adult illustrations, and subjects of interest to adults. There should be variety in the length of sentences and paragraphs, as well as in sentence structure. The book should be long enough to allow for repetition of words, and provision should be made for drill. Units of the book should be related in content and should allow for expansion into projects by the students.

Factors which affect the ease of reading at different levels include the relative difficulty of the words, the number of new words introduced per hundred words, the sentence lengths, the number of different words used, the density and abstractness of ideas, and the size of the typeface used. A number of formulas have been developed which take these factors into account and translate them into a readability level.

One of these is the *Graded Reading Difficulty Work Sheet* (Garrard Press), and then another is the *Smith-Wheeler Readability Formula* (Reading Clinic, Florida State University). Also useful are Robert Gunning's *Technique of Clear Writing* and George R. Klare's *The Measurement of Readability* (see bibliography at end of book). After a little practice, it will take only about 10 minutes to apply these formulas. With further experience, they will not be needed at all. When using them, the teacher should keep in mind that personal judgment is always a necessary supplement to readability formulas. The formulas are not perfect.

When preparing supplementary material, begin by outlining its objectives—i.e., what skills is it intended to teach? Keep in mind, too, the learning objectives of the student. The narrative should be written in an informal style and should use conversation whenever possible. Often it is helpful if the characters in a story come from a social and economic group similar to that of the students and the plot deals with something which is significant to them.

The student has a reading vocabulary of many thousand words and knows most of the reading skills. What he needs now are more fluency, speed, practice, and wide experience with different kinds of writing. Having acquired the ability to use reading as a tool for gaining new information, he must now improve his fluency and comprehension to the point where he can use it as a tool for further learning—for self-study and for acquiring new skills.

To give the student the reading power he needs at this stage, the teacher should guide him in reading both widely and deeply. He should learn how to use the library and should be encouraged to buy his own books, newspapers, and magazines so that he will have a wide range of experience with different types of publications. At the same time, his reading skills should serve his personal needs and interests more specifically. He should be encouraged to search for greater depth of meaning in writings about his own occupational or other interests. The student can also be urged to bring reading matter on his favorite subjects to class.

Some of the student's efforts can now be directed toward developing greater sensitivity to nuances of style and meaning. He can become aware of the literary quality of writing by becoming acquainted with literary devices and forms. His discovery of style, pace, rhythm, alliteration, and tone should suggest to him that writing can have musical qualities.

Unless a teacher is very experienced in writing original material, he will find it easiest to first write the selection in his natural style. He can then simplify it by shortening and breaking up overly long sentences and substituting easy words for difficult ones. He can consult *The Teacher's Word Book of 30,000 Words* (Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University) or *A Core Vocabulary* (Educational Developmental Laboratories) to find the grade level of the words he is using or to find substitutes for difficult words.

Finally, the teacher should check the material with a readability formula, and then test it on adults whose reading level is known, so that necessary revisions can be made.

Another method of devising reading materials is to simplify existing material. This method is particularly useful for making available to students factual material about vocations or other special interests which the teacher could not easily compile himself. He need not worry about violating copyright laws unless he quotes verbatim large sections of someone's else's writing. (In this case, permission from the author should be obtained.) But it is not a violation of copyright laws to use the information which someone else has gathered and to express it in simplified terms. Not the information, but the way in which it is written, is copyrighted.

When simplifying material, guard against making the material sound childish or patronizing. A readability formula should be applied to make sure that the job has not been overdone. (The Garrard work sheet will also be useful for finding words at the desired reading level.) The finished version should be checked in the same way as original material—to determine reading ease and suitability to the reading level for which it is intended.

How Long Does It Take To Learn To Read?

Various claims have been made on this subject by proponents of one method of teaching or another. However, none of these claims is realistic. Although ideally students should be separated according to their reading levels, in practice teachers can expect to have students on all three levels in one class. Each student will have different abilities, different potentials, different objectives, and his own best way of learning.

In addition, each student's progress depends also on the learning conditions in the class and in his home, his listening ability, the amount of effort he expends on outside practice, his general intelligence, the teacher's ability, and the size of the group.

But one generalization is possible which may give the teacher a starting point for making his own predictions. The majority of adults with good listening ability who are taught in a small group will move through each of the three levels in 150 to 250 teaching hours.

In any case, regardless of the time it takes, learning to read and communicate is the primary purpose of the ABE student. Teaching communication is therefore the primary purpose of the ABE program and the primary task of the ABE teacher.

This chapter can be at best only an introduction to the teaching of reading for those who are teaching basic education for the first time. For more intensive study of the ABE reading program, a list of references will be found in the bibliography at the end of the book. The new teacher will find that he cannot be too expert at teaching reading. It is the core of the basic education program, and all other aspects of the program depend on its success.

Chapter 10

Teaching Arithmetic

The disadvantaged person whose mathematical ability depends entirely on his 10 fingers is as embarrassed about disclosing his ignorance as the person who cannot read or write. But the person who cannot do arithmetic has an additional reason for not admitting it—he does not want to be cheated in money transactions.

In communities where adult illiteracy is prevalent, the poor and illiterate frequently develop elaborate schemes for protecting themselves from being victimized by storekeepers and salesmen. They will buy in each store, at any one time, only a limited amount of merchandise, so that the total cost adds up to an amount they can count. They pay for it in amounts close enough to that total so that counting the change is no problem.

Because budgeting or adding and subtracting long lists of figures is beyond them, they allot their money by buying the most necessary items first. If enough money is left over after they have purchased basic food for the week, they buy a few extra cans of fruit.

Regardless of how he does it, any adult who has handled money for years learns to count change and do simple problems in addition or subtraction. He may not be able to write, add a column of numbers, or even explain how he gets the answers, but he does get the answers and they are almost always right.

This kind of sink-or-swim arithmetic makes teaching easier for the teacher and learning easier for the student. The teacher will not have to start from scratch, as he often does in the communications skills, and the student will begin his work with the reassuring knowledge that he knows more than he thought he did about arithmetic.

The General Approach to Teaching Arithmetic

Arithmetic is best taught by following the same general rules that apply to teaching all other aspects of the ABE curriculum. These five commandments of good teaching can be briefly restated as follows:

- Teach what the student wants and needs to know.
- Tie in communication and other subjects with the arithmetic lessons.
- Use a variety of appropriate materials.
- Begin instruction close to where the student's knowledge leaves off.
- Teach by means of concrete, useful examples.

In arithmetic, teaching what the student wants to know means showing the women in the class how to measure for sewing patterns, double a recipe, or put together the right amounts for the baby's formula. Practically every operation in the home—be it cooking, sewing, or cleaning—requires some knowledge of arithmetic. Anyone who has ever put more than the required two-thirds cup of detergent in the washing machine has probably found out that those directions on the box are worth following. The men in the class will probably want to know how to weigh, measure, and compute things which deal with their jobs. However, it may be necessary to combine some consumer education and financial education in money management to make both men and women aware of things they should know.

Teaching the art and science of measuring to the disadvantaged person may, however, require some preliminary discussion to convince members of the class that this kind of precision is worthwhile. The person who has grown up cooking with a pinch of this and a pinch of that may see no reason at first for being more precise about it. And the woman who has always used "about that much" bleach in her clothes may not realize that too much can dramatically shorten the life of her clothes. In other words, some homemaking education may be in order to acquaint the housewives in the class with the more scientific approach to products on the market today, whose manufacturers mean what they say in their directions on the box.

An introduction into the tangled world of credit, loans, carrying charges, and hidden costs may awaken new insights into the usefulness of simple arithmetic. Budgeting, banking, and comparison shopping are other useful concepts which may or may not be suggested by members of the class.

Although banks today are bending over backward to dispel the notion that they are an exclusive service for the wealthy, most disadvantaged people still feel hesitant about walking into a bank. If they do go in, they are not likely to be found chatting with the vice-president about a loan or about which form of checking account would be best for them. The ABE teacher may provide their first exposure to impartial information on money management.

Insurance, too, will be a useful subject for discussion and for teaching arithmetic. It is a lucrative field for those who prey upon the fears and misinformation of the poor. Many individuals pay small amounts every week for insurance which they do not need (at least, they would be better off spending their limited funds on another type of insurance) and for which they are paying a great deal too much when the small payments are all added together. Because they are often afraid to approach the more formal offices of reputable insurance salesmen, they will tend toward the mail order or door-to-door variety which seldom offers a bargain.

The arithmetic of the paycheck is another area which will be important to most members of the class. Students want and need to learn about computations involving their paychecks, including both the arithmetic and the purpose of deductions. Social security, medicare, and income taxes are subjects of general interest for discussion as well as providing practical arithmetic problems. A pie chart showing how the students' tax dollar is spent can double as an example of how percentages are used and arrived at. Closely allied to the arithmetic of the paycheck is the arithmetic of budgeting, which may be an entirely novel concept to some or a mysterious one to others in the class.

The field of consumer education is one in which even the middle class college graduate can use some help these days. In spite of the more stringent packaging and labeling laws enacted recently, comparison shopping still requires more slide rule computations than it should. If two bottles with 16 fluid ounces each cost 89¢ and one bottle containing one pint 4½ ounces costs 67¢, which is the better buy? Or if 15 cans cost $1, how much are six cans?

In addition to the arithmetic involved, the teacher has a good opportunity here to teach some of the precautions consumers must exercise to avoid being confused by manufacturers' claims, packaging techniques, or pricing policies. Unfortunately, advertising claims for miracle ingredients which claim impossible results are most successful with the uneducated whose gullibility is a mixture of ignorance and hope. But they are the ones who can least afford to be deceived by that inert extra ingredient or that oversized box which contains 3 ounces less merchandise than its standard-sized competitor.

In short, communication skills and general information must and should be an integral part of the arithmetic program. This is true partly because pure arithmetic is difficult to teach and more difficult still to understand or apply. In addition, the ability to weigh, measure, and count is meaningless if the student does not know what and why to weigh, measure, and count. There is, after all, little point in being able to count your change correctly if you are buying a bottle of snake oil to remove warts.

Methods of Teaching Arithmetic

Because the ABE program is geared to teaching adults what is important and useful to them, the teaching of arithmetic must be as individualized and practical as the teaching in the rest of the curriculum. And because nothing in the ABE program should be presented in isolated units, the teaching of arithmetic must also be an integral part of both communication training and general education for life.

Just as reading lessons also become listening, speaking, and subject matter lessons, the arithmetic lesson should be part of a larger unit of instruction. It may be the point of emphasis, but it should not be taught as an abstract, isolated skill.

The methods used to accomplish this integrated learning are the same as those used in teaching reading and other skills. Concentrate on one area—such as shopping or measuring—choosing that area which has most interest for the students. Start out with selected readings on that subject, followed by discussion and writing. When the arithmetic of the subject is explained, it will have been preceded by understanding and a heightened interest in mastering it. Use things like coins which students are already familiar with and be sure to emphasize other concrete examples which are or should be part of their daily lives.

Teach the mathematical realities of daily life by showing adults how to arrive at the correct answer to a practical problem. The concept behind this procedure may be a confusing, extraneous part of the lesson which need not enter into the initial learning process. After some exposure to concrete examples, the concepts will become self-evident to the student anyway, even if they are not identified and labeled by the teacher.

The use of concrete examples allows students to learn from the specific to the general and permits them to use many of their senses in the learning process. By answering questions they want answered or teaching them to solve the kinds of problems they meet in everyday life, it also undergirds their motivation.

Many skills and facts are brought into play in a unit of instruction, and each can be geared to the level of all participating students. Computations in a unit on money management or consumer education can vary in complexity from simple addition for the beginner to compound interest for the more advanced.

Teaching Materials

Finding or designing materials for teaching arithmetic should not strain the imagination because so many everyday articles can be used. A handful of change spread on a desk can, by itself, be the source of hours of instruction in addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, percentages, decimals, and fractions, plus the broader concepts of money management and consumer education.

The advantage of beginning instruction with coins is that the adult already knows how to use them. Although most students will deny knowing anything about mathematical concepts and skills, they will be surprised to find out that they do, in fact, know a great deal about them. A unit of instruction can be worked out where coins are used to express abstract concepts, and soon the class will be comfortably working with the ideas of fractions, decimals, and percentages, as well as addition and subtraction.

A simple coin chart similar to the following can be used:

Coin	Decimal	Percentage	Common fraction
1 cent—penny	.01	1%	1/100
5 cents—nickel	.05	5%	5/100
10 cents—dime	.10	10%	10/100
25 cents—quarter	.25	25%	25/100
50 cents—half dollar	.50	50%	50/100

Materials which have to do with the teaching of weights and measures are also easy to come by—rulers, tape measures, measuring cups and spoons, a food or baby scale, road maps, and recipes cut out from newspapers. Newspapers are also a plentiful source of materials for teaching the computational skills used in shopping as well as the broader knowledge needed to be an intelligent consumer. Advertisements can be the raw materials for grocery lists made by students and for discussions of credit buying and comparison shopping.

Banks are often happy to furnish checks and information about their other services, such as loans, savings accounts, and Christmas Clubs. Incidentally, it might be well to point out to the class that money deposited regularly in a savings account earns interest, whereas the popular Christmas Club plan does not. Banks may be a source of information about buying cars and major appliances on the installment plan; they often have charts showing how interest accrues on savings accounts and how sales tax is computed. Sales tax tables may also be available from supermarkets or other retail stores.

Blank budget forms and simple forms for keeping track of small business expenses can probably be provided by private accounting firms or agricultural extension services. While most teachers will not find themselves teaching bookkeeping, some very elementary procedures for recording expenses may be taught for the benefit of homemakers as well as owners of small grocery stores and other one-man businesses who often use their pockets as a cash register.

Paychecks can be provided by the students themselves, as can register receipts from supermarkets and sales tickets from other stores. These can be used to explain the benefits as well as the arithmetic involved in figuring sales tax, social security, and federal and state withholding taxes.

Local insurance companies may be able to provide information which will help to explain the types of policies available and how they work. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and the Internal Revenue Service can also be called upon for information or guest speakers. The Chamber of Commerce is often glad to furnish information about deceptive practices of fly-by-night merchants who prey on the more gullible citizens in the community. Information about other malpractices by merchants will be available from the federal government's consumer information bulletins and the Consumer's Union, publisher of *Consumer Reports*. The latter publication, which contains impartial ratings of products, may be the student's first encounter with a source of unbiased information about the things they buy.

The student's prior knowledge that there are four quarters in a dollar will go a long way toward making the study of arithmetic a relatively easy task. It will also be an interesting, rewarding task if the teacher continues to focus his instruction on the arithmetic of daily life and if he continues to teach arithmetic as only one of the many skills and talents needed by his students in their efforts to live a decent life in a complex world.

Chapter 11

Evaluating the Efforts of Students and Teachers

The titanic hope of adult basic education is to liberate the student from the ignorance and poverty which confine and enslave him. When he learns to add, to spell, and, hopefully, to think, he is being equipped for reentry into American society.

The adult educator hopes he has knocked down some of the student's defenses and hostilities and replaced them with confidence, dignity, and trust. The adult educator hopes that the student is becoming a working, voting, caring citizen and parent. The adult educator hopes this and more for the student. But how does he know whether or not he has succeeded? How does one measure a person's liberation from ignorance?

Evaluation is the process of measuring progress or weighing relative success in relation to predetermined goals. Evaluation may mean assessing the value of one lesson, considering an entire ABE program, or measuring the improvement in a student's grasp of reading. It can be done by such simple, informal procedures as asking those in the class who understood what has been taught to raise their hands. It can be a complex, comprehensive procedure involving written reports and observations, research, tests, and a computer or two to sort it all out.

Evaluation and testing became "The Thing To Do" at one point in educational history. Quite often it was overdone in the sense that pounds of data were collected and never used. In adult basic education, on the other hand, the evaluation pendulum has swung the other way. In an effort to disavow any resemblances to "day school," adult education policy makers have sometimes bent over backwards to avoid giving tests to students.

This no-test policy has meant, in effect, a no-evaluation policy in some schools—an unfortunate state of affairs in a new, experimental program such as adult basic education.

One ABE specialist has phrased the more reasonable middle-ground approach well: "Though all formal testing should be evaluation, not all evaluation should be formal testing." The heart of the matter, as far as the ABE programs are concerned, is contained in that sentence. In other words, tests, surveys, or other compilations of data should not be made unless they answer a question which someone needs answered to evaluate progress. On the other hand, evaluation should not be entirely based on tests nor should it require a large number of tests.

On the contrary, good evaluation will be the result of putting together clues from many sources—including tests—in order to make a reasoned judgment from which, in turn, some constructive action can ensue.

Who Wants To Know?

When the ABE programs were having birth and growing pains, teachers and administrators were too busy to handle more than the essentials for survival: recruiting students and teachers, getting materials, and planning the program. There was neither time nor procedure for evaluating the students who enrolled or to follow up the graduates. There was no opportunity to experiment with ways of teaching or ways of learning.

But this is no longer true. It is now obvious to all concerned that evaluation of ABE programs, processes, and participants is needed by at least five different groups, each for its own reasons.

1. *On a national level,* Congress, representing the taxpayer, wants to know if federal funds are being used to good advantage. In this instance, judgment is based on the goals of the adult basic education program—helping the disadvantaged person become a self-sufficient, participating citizen.
2. *On the professional level,* there are the adult educators whose main concern is making adult education as effective as possible. They want to know more about the student: Why does he enroll? How long does it take him to graduate? Why does he drop out? How many go on to high school? They also want to explore the merits of new theories of learning and teaching in the hope of finding better ways of doing the job.
3. *The program administrator's task* is enlarging and improving his own particular program. He wants to know how to recruit more

students and good teachers, how to spend program funds most wisely, how to improve instruction, and how to be more successful in the retention of students. He will want to be able to show to school officials and to the community the effect ABE classes have on the students who graduate.

4. *The teacher,* who is even closer to the problem of providing good instruction to a well attended class, needs answers to questions which will help him. He wants to know as much as possible about each student so that he can give individualized instruction. He must know who needs special help and what each student's special strengths and abilities are so that he can be a better counselor. He must also know about the interests and achievements of the students so he can plan the program, choose materials and methods, and fill out the required progress reports and records. Finally, he will want to check the effectiveness of his teaching procedures so that he can do the job better next time.
5. *The student* has his own personal set of goals—goals which were compelling and clear enough to bring him to the ABE class. He needs reassurance that this classroom work is bringing him closer to those goals. He wants to be reassured that he *can* learn; that he *can* accomplish what he set out to do; that the outcome is worth the time, effort, and sacrifices he is investing; and that he's doing as well as the next fellow.

Evaluation, then, can be a many-faceted thing. It can and should measure many aspects of the ABE program and can and should answer the questions of a variety of people. But it is worthwhile only if it answers valid questions—if it is a means to a clear-cut end. It is certainly not a means for satisfying idle curiosity. Evaluation must lead to enlightened decisions and to progressive action.

How To Plan for Evaluation?

Because the teacher's main interest will be in his own ability to teach and in the students' ability to learn, much of the evaluation with which he deals will be aimed at testing for these two sets of competencies. However, he will also have an important part in comprehensive evaluation of the entire ABE program in his state and in the nation. He will be responsible for obtaining, recording, and reporting information which will be of use to others outside his classroom, and, therefore, he should have some idea of how he fits into the big picture.

Evaluation depends on a clear statement of specific, measurable objectives. Progress cannot be measured against general statements, fuzzy concepts, or all-inclusive goals. Educational technologists with their programed instruction have demonstrated that the objectives of adult education can be stated specifically enough to be measurable.

Because evaluation should be built into a program from the outset, objectives should be clear at the outset, too. Without such a purposeful approach, students and teachers alike may lose sight of why they are working together and to what end. The teacher may find himself spending disproportionate amounts of time on grammar or arithmetic if the broader objectives of adult education are not kept in sharp focus. The student, on the other hand, may become discouraged if his original motivations for attending class are not recalled to his attention and reinforced.

Once the objectives of everyone from students to taxpayers are clearly in view and have been translated into concrete questions, the next task is to choose the appropriate type of measurement.

Many times the questions will be answered by state, professional, or national powers that be when they request the teacher to provide and record certain types of information about the students in the class. There will also be specific requests for transfer records from the adult high school or from potential employers of former students.

Many of the formal reports will have to be based on standardized tests, with the results expressed in terms of standard units of measurement. Information about a large group can only be expressed in standardized, impersonal summary statistics. Since these are gross estimates, the deficiencies of standardized measurement will probably not influence the results a great deal. Besides, this is the only way presently known to make comparative measurements on a large scale.

However, assessing the progress of 15 members of a class—or one particular member of that class—is quite a different matter. There is no justification for impersonal estimates here.

When the teacher wants to assess the effectiveness of his teaching techniques—or the progress of his students—informal measurement should be relied upon as much as possible. Interviewing, counseling, examining samples of the student's work, observing work habits, or giving tests on the material taught in class are all examples of the informal approach to evaluation.

These informal measurements should be matched by an individual interpretation of results. The teacher will want to measure a student's progress against that student's own capacity and expectations rather than comparing him with some mythical, average ABE student.

The teacher should also remember that no test is perfect and that test scores are at best estimates. In fact, no standardized test is accurate enough to measure the tiny increments of learning at the beginning level. Often a study of a student's mistakes will be more fruitful than counting the number of correct responses. For example, there is a great deal of difference between a paper with 10 random, careless errors and one with 10 errors which all follow the same mistaken pattern of thinking.

A test should never be used as an isolated or infallible means of revealing the true ability of a student. Much more information can be gained if scores of successive tests are compared or if test scores in one subject are compared with those in another. For instance, a student who scores higher in a vocabulary test than he does in reading will probably need more instruction in reading skills. The one whose scores are reversed will probably benefit from vocabulary training.

More of the pros and cons of testing will be considered shortly, but it might be well to point out here that, regardless of their drawbacks, tests are here to stay. Until such time as someone comes up with a more accurate, fairer, less threatening way of measuring achievement, tests will have to be among the tools used to provide a useful and necessary index of progress.

The teacher's problem will not be whether or not tests should be used, but rather *how* to use tests to measure proficiency and accomplish other constructive purposes without unduly frightening or antagonizing the students. He will also want to know more about how tests should be chosen, administered, interpreted, and combined with other methods of evaluation.

Overcoming the Student's Fears of Tests

Knowing the deprivation, despair, and deficiencies which have been the life pattern for the disadvantaged student, it is not surprising that he reacts to testing with fear and hostility. To the student, the test is just another device for classifying him as inadequate. It will remind him of similar unsuccessful occasions when he did not know the answers—or could not read the questions—and did not measure up: school exams, voting tests, driver's license tests, and job tests.

He has been found wanting many times before, and each additional failure becomes more painful. Besides, he does not like to advertise his ignorance, especially his inability to read and write. In short, his initial reaction to the idea of being tested is negative. Often his worst fears are confirmed when he begins to take the test.

First there is the rigid format. Many answer sheets have tiny spaces crowded together for writing answers or marking choices. They are hard to see and hard to mark. Then there are the complicated directions to read and remember: "Pick one answer." "Mark all the correct responses." "Underline the wrong ones." "Circle the item that's different." "Go back and put a check mark beside the one which. . . ."

And then, of course, there's a time limit, which means hurry and worry. It also means making decisions about pace. The student wonders if he should spend a lot of time figuring out question 2, or should he go on to question 3? Will he ever get to question 11? Maybe he should skip the hard ones and do the easy ones first. "Or maybe," the student is all too likely to say to himself, "maybe I might as well quit."

Many students unacquainted with the art and craft of taking tests give up quite easily as soon as one difficult question comes along. They give up because they are afraid to try or to guess. Not participating, they have found, is less painful than being wrong.

Standardized tests may have the added disadvantage of being phrased in language unfamiliar to the students. And the questions about dental checkups or savings accounts, which were designed for middle class test-takers, may make no sense at all to the ABE student. Finally, tests which are oriented toward children will make the adult who is asked to count balloons or teddy bears feel more than slightly ridiculous.

In other words, the teacher planning to give any kind of test is not likely to find a very receptive attitude in beginning students. But the disadvantaged student's allergy to tests and testing need not be cured by eliminating entirely the source of his difficulty. On the contrary, if he can be taught to take a test calmly and efficiently, he will have learned to master a crucial technique which he can apply to all future tests in and out of the ABE classroom. If, in addition, he learns this skill, his suspicion will turn to trust and his aversion to testing turn to a desire to know how he is getting along.

How does the teacher make testing more acceptable to students? To begin with, the teacher must choose a test suitable for adults and one which disadvantaged students can handle. He should test only for good reasons and make every test count—the test he chooses should give him exactly the information he and the student are after. In addition, the following suggestions may be beneficial:

- Whenever possible, make the mechanics of test-taking simple, informal, and natural.
- Minimize rigid procedures, such as the use of complicated answer sheets.
- Explain clearly the instructions and give students plenty of practice in the techniques required.
- Explain how the student should use his time when taking the test.
- Remind him that mistakes are stepping-stones to learning and that it is all right to guess if necessary (he might know more than he thinks he does).
- Encourage the student to "keep going" if a question is difficult, and emphasize that he is not to quit or stew over it for a long time.
- Above all, provide a calm, unhurried, reassuring atmosphere which will communicate better than words the constructive attitude you have about the test.

When the test has been marked, explain the results to the student and show him how he can gain new insight from them. Spend as much time as possible going over the test with the student. Avoid grading it if possible—the important thing is that he make progress toward his goals. Ask him to explain what parts of it were difficult, what he learned, and how he feels about his progress. With this information at hand, the teacher can help the student formulate his own opinion of his performance in line with a view of his actual accomplishment.

Explaining the Benefits of Testing

Any program of testing should serve either the student, the teacher, or the program. Ideally chosen tests, intelligently administered, interpreted, and used will serve all of these purposes. However, since any benefit to the teacher or the program is, in the long run, a benefit to the student, it is possible to look at all of the advantages and uses of tests from the student's point of view.

Besides revealing to a student the areas of learning in which he needs more help or practice, a test can be a vehicle for learning useful skills. The student will learn, for instance, to follow directions, to apply the skills he has learned to new problems or situations, and to master the rules of the testing game so that he can take the next examination more successfully.

The student can count on receiving better and more personalized instruction from a teacher who has evaluated his teaching techniques and planned his program with the help of test results. He will be reassured to know, for example, that he is not the only one in the class who did not understand fractions and that his teacher is, therefore, planning new ways of teaching this concept. He can also be glad that his teacher noticed how frequently he confuses a *5* with a *2* and is planning to give him special help in shape discrimination.

Having done well on the tests which the teacher prepared covering recently taught material, the student may be less rattled when he is faced with a standardized test—especially if it is administered when he is more familiar with the teacher, his classmates, and the testing procedure.

Once he has convinced himself that he *can* learn and *can* go onto a job or adult high school, chances are he may more readily see the need for standardized tests to furnish data for completion records, transfer information, and follow-up studies.

However, when the student first enters a class, he is not certain he will return the next day, much less graduate. At this time, the procedure described in Chapter 4 is more appropriate—that of using quick, painless word recognition tests or other informal methods to classify students for initial placement. There is no way of explaining the benefits of testing to a new student—and no reason for testing his mettle on the first day.

Making Evaluation Successful

Not only does evaluation answer different kinds of questions for different groups and individuals, but its success depends on the interplay of a variety of techniques and attitudes.

The classroom teacher needs to remember some of the basic requirements of sound evaluation—especially if he has had little experience in this area. He must know evaluation is a purposeful measuring of progress toward clearly stated objectives; that evaluation must be built into the program and his own lesson plans; and that it should consist of a balanced mixture of formal and informal, individualized and standardized procedures.

The teacher must also be sensitive to the attitudes which are necessary to make evaluation, and specifically testing, successful. He must help the student acquire a new appreciation for tests, so that he can receive the many benefits they offer. At the same time, he must exert his influence to change or modify unsound attitudes toward testing which may be expressed in terms of unreasonable requests for data about the students.

Finally, the teacher must search his own soul to be sure that his own attitudes toward testing and evaluation are constructive. He must be sure that in his own mind he does not harbor resentment against requirements for testing, observing, and recording information which stem from valid professional and administrative needs outside the classroom.

The teacher should be aware of the fact that all testing must be evaluative, but that not all evaluation should be testing. Furthermore, he should remember that any assessment of progress becomes true evaluation only if it is interpreted and acted upon. Once he has grasped the value and meaning of evaluation, the teacher will find he has discovered a new ally—an additional source of learning for his students and for himself.

Chapter 12

The Successful ABE Teacher

The disadvantaged, illiterate person who comes back to school does so for good and sufficent—often urgent—reasons. Although one can guess at some of the practical benefits he may have in mind when he takes this big step, there is no way to know for certain which of these is the most prevalent or the most compelling.

It has perhaps been too quickly assumed that, because they are so often poor or unemployed, disadvantaged adults return to classes in order to become employable or to get a better job. It may be a symptom of inability to comprehend poverty and empathize with the poor to say blandly, "Money is all a poor person wants." By itself, money has seldom been a primary source of satisfaction to a rich man. Education for the middle class is thought of primarily as a source of personal enrichment, not financial gain. Why cannot the poor person be stirred by the same aspirations?

The ABE program's broad goals represent an attempt to counteract this kind of narrow, somewhat patronizing view of the poor. The ABE program sees the poor individual first as a person and second as an individual with a small or nonexistent bank account. As such, his main problems are his poverty of spirit and of opportunity, not his financial poverty. His major rehabilitation will come in terms of mental and spiritual riches, of which a bigger paycheck is often a happy by-product.

It is true that money makes many of life's problems more bearable, while a lack of it will often turn a minor difficulty into a calamity. But the experience of mankind has shown that it does not buy happiness, self-esteem, or even personal success. If it did, there would be no reason for this country's Kennedys, Rockefellers, Fords, Harrimans, and Lyndon Johnsons to engage in the demanding public service to which they often dedicate their lives.

The basic education student himself, painfully aware as he is of the value of money, does not define his goals in terms of dollars. In some recent interviews, a number of ABE students were asked why they were willing to come back to school. Interestingly enough, 70 percent of those who responded gave *personal satisfaction* as their reason. They wanted to be able to help their children with their homework, read the daily newspaper and the Bible, or write a personal letter.

This is not to deny that they also wanted a decent wage in order to buy the objects of the decent life. It means, only, that in the overall scheme of things, personal satisfaction seemed more important to them than dollars and cents.

This insight into the motivations of the student, statistically unauthenticated though it may be, takes on added importance when it is realized that about half of those who enroll in basic education programs drop out before the end of the year. Undoubtedly certain of them leave because of some personal crisis, but many studies indicate that most leave because they do not find the personal satisfaction they sought in the class. And, by and large, the person responsible for what they find—or do not find—in the classroom is the teacher.

The teacher cannot consider each dropout a personal failure because there are many other reasons for a student's discontinuing his ABE education. On the other hand, because the teacher's influence can keep these external factors to a minimum and because his own performance as a teacher is the one factor which he can effectively control, this chapter will be devoted to those principles and practices which make the successful teacher—a teacher who can keep his students!

Why Do Students Drop Out?

The life-style of the deprived person is not conducive to regular attendance patterns. He lives from crisis to crisis in an atmosphere of impending disaster. Minor illnesses, which he has long since learned to disregard, will seldom keep him home. But major illnesses and death, trouble with authority or the law, unemployment or the need to hold two jobs, eviction, car trouble, or even bad weather which makes unpaved streets impassible and slows down public transportation—all these things hang threateningly above his head. When the delicate thread breaks, as it often does, he is physically unable to come to class.

There is little that can be done about most of these catastrophies. Some can be alleviated with the help of community agencies. But even if he cannot help, the teacher can, through a counselor or a teaching aide, keep in touch with the student who has been struck by some personal disaster. How this can be done will be described later in this chapter. The point here is that, although the student may have to miss one class—or many—if the teacher has established sufficient rapport with the student and continues to keep in touch with him, he will frequently return to the program sooner or later when he is able to do so.

The student's hand-to-mouth existence also means that his life fluctuates all too rapidly to be able to accomodate to long-range plans. Many of those who drop out do so because their lives have taken a sudden turn which makes their original expectations impossible to fulfill. Here again, the teacher has no control over the events of the student's life. But he can—through proper counseling, especially at the initial interview—help the student steer clear of long-range plans which are predicated on a continuation of the status quo. If the teacher helps the student to set realistic short-term goals, any reversal in his mode of living will not necessarily upset his motivations for returning to school.

Often it is neither the teacher nor the student, but the school system itself, that is responsible for students' leaving the program. The long vacation period between June and September is sometimes one of the culprits. Although the teacher may need, and doubtless deserves, a vacation, the program should continue throughout the summer for the benefit of those students who want to attend class without interruption. Since the summer break is purely an administrative device, the teacher may have some success in encouraging school officials to modify it in those systems that otherwise shut down for the summer.

The vagaries of federal funding and accounting procedures often result in uncertainty about the funds available to the ABE program, and a program may be suddenly discontinued. When this happens, ABE students are not only abruptly dispossessed from the classroom, but their faith in the stability and concern of the sponsors of the program generally suffers a mortal blow. Many do not recover sufficiently to attempt another venture into adult education. Teachers, too, are often discouraged sufficiently by such a sudden discontinuation that they conclude that an in-service course in something as unstable as adult education is a waste of time.

This means, then, that barring personal disaster in the life of the student or some form of administrative snafu, the student who fails to return to the classroom is usually reacting to an unsatisfactory course taught by an unsuccessful teacher. The kindest thing which can be said for both course and teacher is that neither has sufficiently risen to the challenge of the student's expectations to *hold* him in the program, even though, relatively speaking, the program and the teacher were not ineffective enough to drive the student away. In adult education there must be a *positive* attraction in the classroom. Lack of negative factors is not enough.

What Makes a Successful Teacher?

Fortunately, the ABE teacher does not have to be perfect. Nor does he have to follow one set pattern of behavior or assume one stereotyped personality. Many methods lead to success in the ABE classroom, and each teacher will have his own special contribution to make.

One basic tenet of good teaching is that the teacher must not and cannot divert his attention from the expectations of his students. This has many implications for the ABE teacher. The most important of these is that he must not guess at the motivations or goals of his students; rather, he must make every effort to find out what they are. The process of discovering a student's motivations requires time and patience, sensitivity and tact, and a relaxed, receptive manner which indicates to the student that he can speak freely and will find a listening ear.

However, the teacher is expected to know what he is about. If a student's hopes are too high or his efforts misdirected, he wants to know. He looks to the teacher for guidance. The teacher should be able to offer such guidance if he is competent in his subject matter, if he knows how to help the student communicate freely about himself, and if he has taken the trouble to look up what information about the student that may be available.

If the teacher looks closely at each person in his classroom as a unique personality, he is not likely to forget that each one is an adult. Like other adults, the ABE student thrives in a pleasant social atmosphere, be it a party or a classroom. The deprived adult will need this kind of atmosphere even more than the more privileged for whom life is generally a succession of more or less pleasant circumstances. In fact, the classroom can become a refreshing social outlet for the deprived person and can help him acquire, perhaps for the first time, a social identity. Needless to say, humiliating questions about tardiness, absence, or homework are not conducive to a supportive, adult social climate.

The second basic tenet of adult education is professional competency. This means teaching the student what he wants to know in an interesting, understandable way. The teacher who is drawing on a variety of materials, enlisting the assistance of school and community, and tapping the full resources of his imagination is not likely to find anyone dozing in the back row. As for getting a message across, he will know how to reach his students if he knows where they are and why, where they came from, and where they are going. Psychologists call this being able to relate to people. Students know to call it good teaching.

Admittedly, both experience and continuing programs of in-service education will be needed to provide the competency and personality growth needed to become an eminently successful teacher. While more good teachers are made than born, they generally do not begin their careers at the pinnacle of success. But as long as students sense (and they will) an integrity of purpose, a sincere desire to help them, and a thorough knowledge of materials and techniques, they will readily forgive and forget any newcomer's honest mistakes.

In most cases, the decision to drop out of the program or to stay (if the reasons are not beyond the student's control) will be an emotional one, not a technical evaluation of progress made. The student will either sense that the course is worthwhile, or he will have the opposite reaction to the climate for learning which the teacher creates.

It must be acknowledged that the teacher's job is a big one. It demands both time and effort. It seems reasonable, therefore, that the teacher should take advantage of any help he can get from community agencies, from good instructional materials, and from teacher aides.

Using Teacher Aides

Teacher aides in the classroom will help the students in a number of ways. Besides giving the teacher more free time to give personal attention to students, they can help create the kind of emotional security once generated by the one-room schoolhouse. In addition, some aides can carry out certain classroom functions better than the teacher.

Volunteers and paid helpers, both college graduates and disadvantaged students, are already working in ABE classrooms. Aides have been so effective in helping teachers that, in the Education Professions Development Act, federal legislation providing funds for their training has already been passed.

Most states restrict the use of nonprofessionals in the classroom by state regulations ("The aide will not be responsible for any portion of the instructional program" or "The aide will work only under the direct supervision of the certified teacher"). These restrictions are sound because an aide should not be expected to replace the teacher in any way. However, after completing a training program and spending a certain amount of planning time each day with the teacher, the aide can become familiar with the duties he is to perform.

Aides are classified roughly into three categories: instructional aides, clerical aides, and social aides.

Instructional aides usually have some college education. The same background is helpful for *clerical aides,* who are also given responsibility for instruction. But, in some cases, persons who come from the same population as the class members can be trained by the teacher to help with instruction and clerical work.

Rather than formal education, leadership qualities are required by *social aides*. Their job is to bridge the social and communications gap between teacher and students. The aide should come from the same background as the students (in fact, he may be a student or a former student), and should be able to speak their language. This is true literally as well as figuratively—bilingual persons are sometimes employed. Of course, the social aide must also be able to speak the teacher's language if he is to be the interpreter between teacher and class.

The trained instructional aide can take on routine assignments such as making and showing flash cards and charts, arranging and conducting field trips, arranging for outside speakers, and helping students practice reading or speech sounds.

The clerical aide can relieve the teacher of some of the housekeeping chores, such as gathering and distributing materials; checking books out of the library during the day; taking charge of the borrowing, returning, and maintenance of equipment; and cutting stencils of vocabulary lists, instructions, or tests.

The social aide's success will depend pretty much on his or her ability to establish a rapport with the students. If he has a feel for the values, life-style, and self-image of the students, in some areas he can become a more effective counselor than the teacher. The social aide can, for example, find out informally what is bothering a member of the class and, therefore, possibly help correct a potentially serious problem before it gathers steam. He can help recruit students, make visits or phone calls to absentees, bring their problems to the attention of the teacher, and help them take advantage of community services. If the aide has been or is a student himself, his arguments for staying in school will probably be more convincing than the teacher's.

Although some teachers feel that the ABE students who are used as aides will miss some of their own instruction, others see teaching as an effective method of learning. When a student helper (preferably one from another class) teaches another student, his own understanding of the material increases as well as that of the student he is tutoring. Besides, the student has the advantage of having more in common with the other students than the teacher does and may, therefore, be better able to explain things.

In any case, if the school you teach in does not use teaching aides, you should talk to your adult education director about the possibility of recruiting college graduates, high school students, former adult students, housewives, or Neighborhood Youth Corps and VISTA workers to lend a hand. Or you might look to ABE graduates and others in the students' community. If aides are carefully selected, trained, and supervised by the teacher, the result should certainly be more successful teaching, learning, and counseling.

Chapter 13

Organization of the ABE Program

The legislative history of the ABE program began in 1964 when funds were allocated by the Office of Economic Opportunity for a basic education program to be administered by the U.S. Office of Education. Since this program was funded late in fiscal year 1965, little was done until after June 30, 1965, at the end of that first year.

The following year, the ABE program was made a part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Described in Title III of the amendments to the Act, it was formally titled the Adult Education Act of 1966. ABE was now officially in business.

Administration on the Federal Level

The ABE program on the federal level is administered by the chief of the Adult Education Branch of the U.S. Office of Education and his regional counterpart in each of the nine regional education offices. The branch has two sections, one of which handles plans submitted by states, the other of which is responsible for materials, supplies, and data about basic education.

The branch develops guidelines for the state plans which are required under the 1966 Act, is responsible for teacher training and education programs, and encourages the introduction of innovative materials and methods into local ABE programs. It is a source of help and guidance to states, especially those just starting ABE programs.

The regional program officers of adult education are located in the regional offices which were created in 1966 to decentralize the operation of the federal office of education. Although the duties and responsibilities of these new positions are not yet fully developed, the program officer works with state directors of adult education in his region on all facets of ABE programs, such as state plans or budgeting problems.

Administration on the State and Local Levels

The full responsibility for financing and administering the national program rests on the states—specifically the state department of education. Its fundamental role is that of providing leadership and assistance in developing local programs. It also has certain regulatory functions in regard to use of funds, certification requirements for teachers, and other aspects of the program as prescribed by state laws.

The typical state usually has, within the state department of education, a state coordinator for adult basic education who is responsible to the state director of adult education. The state coordinator's staff usually consists of two or three "consultants" to local programs and a fiscal officer.

In order to be of maximum benefit to the local programs, the adult education staff of the state department of education must provide a full measure of creative leadership in addition to carrying out its regulatory functions. It should take the initiative in working with the university and local programs toward overall growth and improvement of ABE programs. It should also work with state professional adult education organizations to gain legislative support and additional state funds for ABE programs.

Members of the adult education staff in the state department of education are often the only resource local programs have for evaluating methods and materials and for providing in-service education programs. For this reason, they should be professionally competent to give this kind of consultative service, and they should be administratively free to provide it.

The state consultative program should provide services to local programs that are not available locally. Testing and appraising new equipment and instructional materials are priority functions. If the state department of education consultants will either test or pass on information concerning new equipment and instructional materials, it will provide a service to local programs which can afford neither the funds nor the time to conduct field tests.

On the local level, the directors for adult basic education usually administer the ABE classes in several schools, via the principal of each school. Usually they report to the director of adult education for the school. While the administrative hierarchy will vary from county to county and from state to state, it will follow fairly closely the organization described here.

Financing the ABE Program

Federal funds to states under the Adult Education Act of 1966 are allocated on a formula based on the number of persons, 25 years of age or older, who have had a fifth-grade education or less, according to 1960 census figures. While originally the minimum allocation to each state was $25,000 a year, this figure was increased to a minimum of $100,000 per year in 1967.

In order to receive federal funds for ABE programs, each state must submit a comprehensive state plan according to the guidelines set up by the State Plan Program Operations Section in the U.S. Office of Education. This plan outlines in some detail the state's intentions in regard to program operation, priorities, methods of funding, and methods of instruction and counseling. Because it is difficult to amend once it is submitted and approved, the plan should be inclusive, imaginative, and flexible within the prescribed regulations.

The plan should provide a theoretical and practical guide for the orderly development of an ABE program for the entire state. It should, for example, provide for—

- Program continuity through sound funding procedures and leadership.
- Involvement of state universities in training leadership and developing programs.
- Adequate staff in the state department of education to assist local programs with instruction, materials, research, and fiscal problems.
- Personnel for a statewide teacher training program.
- Keeping of adequate records on students and funds.
- A total agency approach to families of ABE students.
- An equitable system of fund allocation to local programs.
- The development of additional state support for ABE programs.

In addition to this plan, states must provide matching funds equal to at least 10 percent of the federal grant. Federal funds are granted only after a state's comprehensive plan for adult basic education has been approved and must be spent according to the state plan as well as federal, state, and local fiscal procedures.

Funds are then appropriated to local school districts in one of two ways. Most usually, a specified amount is allocated for specific class units, covering teaching hours, instructional supplies, and an amount for administration. Some local or county school systems are asked to write a plan (similar to the state plan) which includes a budget and then to submit this plan to the state for funding.

Although regulations permit advances to local systems, most states distribute funds to local districts on a reimbursement basis. Equipment purchased on a state or local level with ABE funds belongs to the federal government and may not be disposed of unless cleared through the state office.

There are a number of problems which this method of funding produces. First of all, fiscal control tends to be cumbersome when federal, state, and local regulations must be adhered to before funds can be expended. It sometimes becomes difficult for administrators at all levels to prevent fiscal procedures from dictating the educational program.

Difficulties are also encountered at the end of every fiscal year when, on June 30, funds for the program run out before Congress has time to act on a new appropriation measure. To take care of this penniless interim period, Congress has provided that federally funded programs may continue to expend funds on the assumption that they will receive the same amount of money as they did in the previous fiscal year.

However, each state may spend only one-twelfth of its last annual appropriation each month. This month-at-a-time budgeting makes it impossible for states to make any large investments in materials, personnel, or programs. Then, after several months, if a state receives a new appropriation which is higher than that for the previous year, it may not have enough time to spend this increased amount. Since funds not spent revert back to the federal government, the state will have lost the opportunity to use these funds.

Funds for Training and Research

In addition to funds which are allocated to states, Section 309 of the Adult Education Act of 1966 provides that 10 to 20 percent of federal funds appropriated for the ABE program may be set aside, at the discretion of the Commissioner of Education, for teacher education and special projects. States must apply for these funds separately.

FEDERAL EXPENDITURES FOR ADULT BASIC EDUCATION
ADMINISTERED BY THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Fiscal year	Total allocation	Amount spent for teacher training (309a)	Amount spent for special projects (309b)
1965	$19,000,000	$ —	$ —
1966	21,100,000	—	—
1967	30,000,000	1,400,000	1,520,000
1968	38,640,000	1,500,000	6,550,000*

* Section 309b funds were temporarily frozen as of May 23, 1968.

Recognizing the increasing importance of teacher training and special projects, Congress has supported many innovative approaches. One is the series of summer institutes held for teacher trainers and administrators beginning in the summer of 1966. Each institute provided an intensive training program lasting from two to four weeks which was instrumental in helping states obtain a corps of experienced teachers and teacher trainers. In many cases, local school systems were able to begin their own programs of in-service teacher training and preservice training as a result of these regional institutes.

As state and local programs of in-service education develop, there will be less need for these summer institutes, although the need for research and special projects is not likely to diminish. There will also be a continuing need for university participation in adult basic education.

The Role of the University

In the past, a regional university could adequately provide professional education for several states, often with a single professor of adult education. There was little demand for professional preparation in public school adult education, and there seemed to be little inclination on the part of school superintendents to require graduate courses for their adult administrators and teachers.

The rapid growth of adult basic education programs, however, has demonstrated the need for professionally prepared adult education teachers. The state university today has some responsibility for in-service education courses across the state, as well as for courses on campus leading to the master's and doctor's degrees. With several hundred new teachers in the adult basic education program, the ongoing secondary program, and various community programs, there is a considerable demand for teacher education.

The U.S. Office of Education increased the demand for teacher education in adult basic education by funding the series of regional teacher training workshops. Many adult teachers received graduate credit in adult education and became interested in pursuing advanced degrees in the field. It appears that the trend toward university involvement in the field of education for the disadvantaged will increase rather than diminish in the years ahead.

The Future of Adult Education

The ABE program has grown. In less than two years, enrollment has soared from a few thousand disadvantaged adults to more than 300,000. Certainly the Adult Education Act of 1966 has been the magic wand in the hands of the federal government for getting the national

ABE program started. But federal support, both administrative and financial, will not by itself create a lasting program of adult basic education. Four other elements are necessary if the ABE program is to grow and prosper in the coming years:

1. *State and local* awareness of the need for strong basic education programs, coupled with a willingness to allocate funds for the program
2. A commitment from at least one *state university* in each state to develop graduate education programs in adult education, so that the quantity and quality of professionally trained personnel can be increased
3. A strong *state department of education* which recognizes that its function is to improve and extend educational opportunities in the state
4. Strong, responsible *professional organizations* of adult educators to promote the development of high standards of quality education.

Each element is dependent on the others for a successful program on all levels, and each has a responsibility to work in harmony with the others. Working within this administrative framework, the conscientious teacher will want to draw on all available assistance to make a continuing contribution to his profession and his personal professional growth.

Chapter 14

What Can Be Expected of the ABE Program?

What Can We Hope For?

Assuming that the motives of those sponsoring ABE programs are in line both with those of the deprived student and with the local, state, and federal enactments which make ABE possible, how much success can be anticipated? Unfortunately, the answer cannot be an unqualified one, although one generalization can be made. The kind and amount of change will be directly proportionate to the kind and amount of effort made by the teacher in the classroom.

The teacher who lays great stress on academic skills only can expect to find his students excelling in this area to the detriment of other important changes. The teacher who emphasizes self-realization in its highest form may expect to graduate students who become better parents, consumers, workers, and citizens. The extent of the change in both cases will depend on the teacher's success in communicating with his students.

Although research and statistics on the outcome of adult basic education are sadly lacking, the few studies that do exist are encouraging. They indicate that it is possible to create dramatic changes in the life patterns of students through the adult education process. This knowledge of what can be done should be a source of inspiration for the teacher—a goal to reach and, hopefully, to surpass.

There is a pattern of change which seems to be fairly typical of ABE classes. After a few days or even weeks of class, the deprived adult student will usually begin to communicate with his teacher and fellow students. This communication develops slowly, usually after a somewhat sullen, discouraging silence at the beginning.

Toward the end of the course, many adults will respond to their educational experience with a newfound confidence in themselves and the process of education. They will realize that education does indeed offer them a key to a better life, and, even more important, that they can learn and profit from it, notwithstanding their earlier fears to the contrary. This renewed faith in themselves and in education often manifests itself in plans to continue their education on a high school level or to take advanced vocational training.

Perhaps the greatest value of the adult's new, more optimistic outlook on his life and his work is its impact on his children. Children who grow up in a home where there is hope, work, and concern for the future are in a good position to break the cycle of poverty and ignorance. A child who sees his father or mother working, studying, trying, and, above all, *succeeding* is not likely to be gripped by the failure syndrome which prevents so many people from even trying to get ahead.

One thing which should never be expected of the adult completing his ABE education is his immediate transfer to a skilled, high-paying job. An eighth-grade education is not sufficient today to qualify most adults for any skilled job. Besides, many disadvantaged students are too old to qualify for those few good jobs that do exist.

On the other hand, while an eighth-grade education does not guarantee employment, lack of an eighth-grade education practically guarantees unemployment. Not only are the ABE graduate's chances of finding a job better, but he is in a better position to train or retrain for a vocation. He may choose to go ahead with his secondary education (a twelfth-grade education is a better indication of "literacy" in today's world) or to go directly from the ABE program to a training program in a company, a vocational school, or the Manpower Development Training Program (MDT).

Although the federally financed adult basic education program extends only through the eighth grade, there are many secondary education programs sponsored by various cities and states. In fact, public school systems have been more active in providing adult secondary education than elementary education, partly because teachers seem to be more comfortable working in their specialities and partly because adults who need a high school program are easier to recruit into programs.

Adults can continue their education in a regular high school diploma program or in the General Educational Development (GED) Test Program. Many choose the latter because it requires a smaller investment of time. A GED certificate of equivalency to high school graduation is awarded to students who can pass a test in each of five different subject matter areas: English, literature, social science, natural science, and mathematics. While some students will want to attend classes in order to improve their chances of passing the tests, class attendance is usually not required. A GED certificate has the legal status of a high school diploma in most states and may be used as such for job applications or community and state college entrance requirements.

In the 1965-66 school year, more than 90,000 high school equivalency certificates were awarded in the United States. This field definitely represents an area for future growth in adult education, as some states have no statewide provisions at all for administering or sponsoring secondary education for adults.

What Are the Statistics?

Since facts and figures on the outcome of ABE classes are scarce, no claims can be made for the following statistics except that they represent the possible. They do not represent the typical, the average, or even the best that can be done. But they do serve to give teachers of adults some inkling of what has been accomplished elsewhere.

In an ABE program in Butts County, Georgia, a survey was made to determine the changes in the life patterns of the 75 adults who were enrolled in a basic education program. The results were as follows:

Of the 75 adults participating—
50 indicated that their children would stay in school.
31 influenced a friend to attend ABE classes.
31 used a family budget for the first time.
24 subscribed to a magazine or newspaper for the first time.
18 opened a checking or savings account for the first time.
17 learned to read.
10 registered to vote for the first time.
8 found a job as a result of attending classes.
6 found a better-paying job.
5 were promoted in their jobs.
5 enrolled in a high school program.
3 voted for the first time.

Let us look now at the record of a rather special group of 1,495 so-called hard-core illiterates—migrant and seasonal farm workers—who were enrolled in a full-time training program for 12 weeks. The students came from 12 counties in Central and South Florida to take part in 420 hours of instruction under the direction of the Adult and Veteran Education Section of the Florida Department of Education. All the students were unemployed heads of households who participated in the summer program instead of following the migrant stream of workers out of Florida that summer.

The group can briefly be described as follows:

1495 enrolled
    average age: 39
    average number of dependents: 2½
1423 participated in some instruction
212 dropped out
    142 men
    70 women
1283 completed the course
    760 women
    523 men

It is interesting to note that, while the drop-out rate was relatively low, twice as many men as women dropped out. In addition, more women registered for and completed the course.

At the end of the program, figures show that the older adults achieved higher grade level gains than their younger classmates. Composite grade level gains by age were as follows:

Age	Grade Level Gain
18 - 27	.70
28 - 37	.74
38 - 47	.93
48 - 57	1.24
58 - 67	1.20

Two months after the end of the program, 69 percent of those who had finished the course (59 percent of those who had enrolled) were continuing in some kind of educational or vocational program, and 10 had earned their GED certificates.

1283 completed the course
885 (69 percent) continued in an educational or vocational program.
208 were in an educational program.
81 were placed in jobs.
193 entered Manpower Development Training programs.
403 were waiting to enter MDT programs.
10 received GED certificates.

Impressive as these results are, they do not carry the flesh-and-blood story of the tremendous changes which probably took place in the life-styles of these previously nomadic people. The fact that they were able to stay in one place, earn a living, and become increasingly useful to themselves, their families, and their communities is something that cannot be expressed in numbers.

In answer to the question, "What can we expect of the ABE program?" words are as inadequate as numbers. There is no way to talk about average ABE students in typical classrooms. We cannot in good conscience talk about the prospects of a student with poor native ability without being prepared to gage the power of his dreams. In fact, we must not hamper his prospects by such predictions, if we are to avoid shackling his progress with our lack of faith and vision.

Perhaps the best we can do is to try to match the strength of our efforts to the strength of the students' hopes for a better life. Perhaps the question each teacher should ask himself is, "What can I expect of myself?"

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